

CONFERENCE MATTER FOR RELIGIOUS

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REV. FERREOL GIRARDEY, C. SS. R.

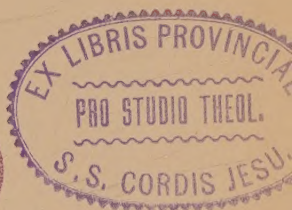
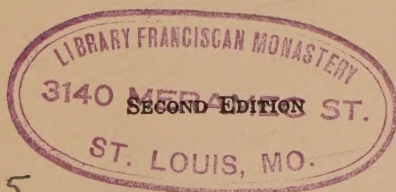
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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Provincial of St. Louis' Province

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CONFERENCE MATTER FOR RELIGIOUS

1. CHARITY. (C)

“This is My commandment, that you love one another” (John 15. 12).

Why does Jesus Christ call it His commandment? First, because Jesus Christ is charity, and came down from heaven expressly to bring to men peace and charity, and prefers this commandment to all the others. Secondly, because He taught it to us, not merely by His words, but much more by His example. His whole life was but an uninterrupted act of charity towards men. Thirdly, because this commandment includes all the others. They are all reducible to the commandment of charity, for “love, and do what you wish.” Fourthly, because the religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of love, and in love His whole religion consists. By charity men are the children of God, are all brethren, form but one flock, but one Church, one family, one body. Suppress the commandment of charity, and the whole grand work of the Church of Christ falls in ruins. Fifthly, because charity is the mark of the disciples of Jesus Christ, “By this all men shall know that you are My disciples, if you have love

for one another" (John 13. 35). Sixthly, because charity is the mark of the predestined. By charity we can distinguish the children of God from the children of the devil. And lastly, because this commandment will last for all eternity, and all the others will cease.

But what does it mean to love our neighbor?

1. To love our neighbor is to wish well and do good to him. "My little children, let us love not in word, but in deed" (1 John 3. 18). True love is not barren; it must be active, in order to exist. "When I choose a friend," says Seneca, "what do you think is my intention thereby? To have a man with whom I may divide my goods, whom I may serve, defend, follow in exile, and for whose sake I may sacrifice myself and die." To love our neighbor includes our readiness to do all this for him, to do for him what Jesus Christ has done for us: "In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren" (1 John 3. 16). "I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls" (2 Cor. 12. 15).

2. To love our neighbor is to live in concord and union with our brethren, for we are all one body in Christ. What is more admirable than the union between the members of the same body? What do they not do for one another? They love one another with a genuine love; they never injure one another, mutually help, serve and de-

fend one another. "To be united in place, but not in heart, is a torment; to be united in heart, though not in place, is a happiness; to be united both in heart and in place, is a real paradise," says Hugh of St. Victor. "It is charity," says St. Jerome, "that makes religious and gathers them together under one rule. Without charity religious houses would be a hell, and their inmates would be real demons; but with charity the convents are a heaven on earth, and their inmates are real brethren, or rather angels, and can truly say: "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to live together in unity" (Ps. 132.i).

"Were Christians," says St. John Chrysostom, "to perform thousands of miracles, if they do not love one another, nor agree together, but live in dissensions and quarrels, they are the laughing-stock of even the pagans." "The devil," says St. Bernard, "does not fear the religious who fast and watch a great deal, who practise great austerities, because he has succeeded in causing the downfall of many; but as to those who live in peace, united to God and their brethren, he fears and dreads them, he despairs of overcoming them and considers them as lost to himself. "Why do wooden ships spring a leak and sink? Because the boards are not well joined together. In like manner, the principal cause of the loss and ruin of a community, is that the members are not joined and united together by charity. Let those, then, who are united by

their rules, be united together by their spirit also; let them bear with one another, defend and help one another to carry the yoke of Jesus Christ, for "a brother helped by his brother is like a strong city" (Prov. 18.19); but if they bite and tear one another, they are both ruined.

3. To love our neighbor is to bear with his defects in all patience. "We bear with our neighbor," says St. Gregory, "as much as we love him. If you love your brethren very much, you will always bear and not notice their defects; if you do not love them, you will have no patience with them, and their defects will impress you as the sun's rays do weak or diseased eyes." "Bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6. 2); bear with one another's ill-temper, infirmities, passions and faults, "and you will accomplish thereby the law of Christ" (Ibid). Which is this law? The law of charity which includes all precepts. Who are those that mutually bear with one another? Those who have charity. "When stags cross a stream or a body of water," says St. Augustine, "they place and rest their heads on the croup of the one in front of them, until the leader is tired, when he retires to the rear to rest in his turn; in this manner they help one another in their weakness and, mutually supporting one another, cross safely, because charity is their vessel." In like manner we should reciprocally help, relieve and support one another.

We are all one and the same body in Jesus Christ, members of one another. See what the members do for one another, how they support one another, how readily and tenderly they assist one another. If a man has a sore in his foot, a vile part of his body, however ugly and offensive the sore, the other members do not hold the foot in horror; on the contrary, the eyes look at it sympathizingly, the hands wash and dress it, the tongue asks remedies for it, and for its cure invokes even the saints and God Himself. All the other members do all in their power to contribute to its cure. "O members of Jesus Christ," exclaims St. Augustine, "love one another, bear with one another and with one another's infirmities, and be not disheartened at one another's shortcomings, and by thus practising charity, you will reach the kingdom of heaven."

4. To love our neighbor is to excuse and conceal his faults and defects. When we throw the cloak of charity over the defects of our brethren, God covers up ours; but when we disclose or expose them, God discloses and publishes ours, *says* a holy abbot. We read of St. Ignatius Loyola that he always spoke well of every one, so that each one felt convinced of being esteemed and cherished by him, and therefore loved and respected him. The holy Abbot Connétable was called the cloak of his brethren, because he carefully concealed their defects and always endeavored to excuse their faults. St. Teresa acted

in like manner, and her nuns declared that she would everywhere take their part. "He who tears up the good name of an absent friend," says Horace, "by making his faults or defects known, who reveals secrets entrusted to him, is a bad citizen." We may add that he is also a bad religious and a false brother.

Holy Scripture compares the tongue of the backbiter to a sword, to a whip, to the tongue of a serpent, to a viper, to fire, to a lion, to a leopard, to death and to hell, in order to show how dangerous it is, how great its ravages and how greatly it is to be feared. "Show me," says St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, "a man who conceals the defects and faults of his brethren, and never defiles his tongue with uncharitable words, and I will, without fear of mistake, proclaim him a saint." Man's physical death begins with his tongue and proceeds further and further until it reaches his heart. Man's moral death begins also with his tongue, with his speech, and gradually reaches the will and the heart. "He that will love life and see good days," says St. Peter, "let him refrain his tongue and his lips, that they speak no guile" (1 Pet. 3.10). Wherefore, if you perceive that your brother has committed a fault, do not take the liberty to accuse and condemn him, but rather excuse him. If you cannot excuse the deed, excuse his intention; say it was an imprudence, a surprise. If the proofs are so evident as to preclude concealment or excuse, attribute it to violent

temptation. St. Bernard declares that we should always seek some reason to excuse, diminish and conceal the faults of our brethren.

5. To love our neighbor is to admonish him of his defects and help him to correct them. God commanded man to watch over his neighbor and to care for him. Hence Cain has always been condemned for his answer: "Am I my brother's guardian?" God has, in fact, placed in our heart a feeling that induces us to watch over one another. "Brethren," says St. Paul, "if a man be overtaken in any fault, instruct him in the spirit of meekness" (Gal. 6. 1). "Fraternal correction, having for its object the amendment of our brethren, constitutes a precept," says St. Thomas; "for if he transgresses the law of charity who lets a wounded man die, although he could have saved him by dressing the wound, he fails still more grievously against charity, who neglects fraternal correction, when he beholds his brother's soul covered with the mortal wounds of sin." The Holy Ghost tells us not to fear holding out a helping hand to save our brother. Do not the members of our body help one another to be clean? Let us likewise help our brethren to be cleansed of all the stains and defilements caused in their soul by their faults and shortcomings.

To love our neighbor is carefully to avoid contention, disputes and quarrels, and all sarcastic and biting remarks. St. Paul warns us not to indulge in wordy disputes, which do harm even

to the listeners. A servant of God should not engage in contention, but should yield easily in indifferent matters. "The glory of man," says the Holy Ghost, "is to avoid quarrels." By this means we prevent bitter feeling, contempt, the cooling of affections, which are the usual result of discussion and the cause of many sins. "Refrain from strife," says the Holy Ghost, "and thou shalt diminish thy sins" (Eccli. 28.10). "Nothing is more unworthy of a religious," says St. Bernard, "than to dispute about trifles, like a woman." "It is an honor for a man," says the Holy Ghost, "to keep from quarreling" (Prov. 20.3). Such a one performs an act of charity every time he avoids causing ill-feeling and bitterness usually arising from disputes, and, at the same time, he performs also an act of humility by overcoming his natural desire to get the better of others in discussion, and an act of prudence and good judgment by maintaining peace and union with all.

The great St. Ephrem, in his spiritual testament, glories in never having quarreled with any one, but in having always yielded to others for peace' sake. St. Moses, the Ethiopian, when arguing one day with St. Macarius, spoke harshly and abusively to him. But God at once punished him by permitting a devil to possess him, but a devil so filthy as to compel him to utter all sorts of unbecoming things. This punishment lasted until St. Macarius, by praying for his deliverance,

obtained from God the forgiveness of his fault. Such a punishment of such a saint, shows us how opposed to charity are such faults, and how greatly God detests them.

7. To love our neighbor is to treat him kindly and to avoid whatever may displease him. Charity forbids not only what may greatly injure our neighbor, but even whatever may slightly offend him, such as, words wanting in due respect, excessive teasing, playing tricks on him, etc. A true friend abstains carefully from all that may in the least give pain to his friend, tries to keep every evil from him, and to procure him every good. Wherefore, if we perceive that our actions or words displease, hurt or grieve our neighbor ever so little, "we should," says St. Dorothy, "at once cease and not continue our actions or our words; this I tell you now and a thousand times over, for it is better that everything should perish, than that we should fail against charity or hurt our neighbor's feelings. Charity condemns sour, harsh words, contemptuous expressions, and places in our mouth only sweet, kind, affable and respectful words denoting our esteem for our neighbor." "Judge your neighbor by your own self," says the Holy Ghost to us. Let us, then, ask ourselves how we would like to be spoken to drily, harshly, commanded haughtily; if we would feel hurt by such language, we should not address it to our neighbor, who is human like ourselves. One of the means of causing charity to flourish the

most is meekness in speech and conduct towards others. "A kind word," says the Holy Ghost, "multiplieth friends and appeaseth enemies." Wherefore, let us endeavor to acquire and preserve in our words and actions the spirit of meekness, which, as the Holy Ghost teaches, renders us amiable to men, for, says St. Bernard, "as it is impossible to please God without faith, so also it is impossible to please men without meekness and affability."

8. To love our neighbor is to oblige him whenever we can, as St. Paul recommends: "Serve one another with charity." A good religious is, therefore, obliging, willing to oblige, ever ready to share the tasks of others, to relieve the overburdened, to content every one, that he may be able to say with Jesus Christ: "I am among you as he that serveth." "Nothing contributes more to keep up charity," says St. Ambrose, "than to forestall one another, esteeming our neighbor more than our own selves; the subjects being ever willing to fulfil the will of their superiors, and the latter being eager to serve their subjects as a tender mother is eager to serve her own child."

"The love religious owe one another," says Ven. Father Champagnat, "should be active and consistent in obliging one another on every occasion, in helping one another, in taking another's place in the performance of tasks, whenever it may be necessary or useful, and in being ever ready to render service to one another." "My

brethren," says St. Bernard, "it behooves you to be animated with the spirit of charity, that is, to support, help and serve one another, so that it may be said of you what was said of the prophet Jeremias: 'This one truly loveth his brethren.' "

9. To love our neighbor is to console him in affliction, to sympathize in his misfortunes and to condole with him in his sufferings. The just, according to the saying of the Holy Ghost, are naturally compassionate and exercise mercy on every occasion; hence they may say with holy Job: "I wept for him that was afflicted, and my soul had compassion on the poor" (Job 30.25). St. Paul admonishes us to weep with those who weep, to sympathize with them in all their troubles. It is so true that he who has charity is sensible to the miseries of others, that in Hebrew the word for good, just and holy, means also mercy, tenderness and compassion. "True justice," says St. Gregory, "is always accompanied with compassion, and false justice, with harshness and disdain." "The heart of the saints," says St. Macarius, "is full of feeling and easily moved, and that of the demon is inflexible, and his bowels are as hard as a rock." "Oh, how beautiful," says St. Alphonsus, "it is to console the afflicted, to wait on the sick, to encourage and sustain the pusillanimous, to cheer up the sad and the melancholy!" The more we devote ourselves to these works of mercy, and the more we sympathize with our neighbor's afflictions, the more will God love us!

10. To love our neighbor is to procure him spiritual goods and give him a good example in all things, for the object of charity is to procure for our neighbor especially the goods of grace, eternal salvation, and, as we are living in community, to help one another to become saints. Hence the Rule induces us to pray for one another, to help one another with good counsels, to admonish one another of our defects, but especially to give one another a good example. In a large crowd pushing and crowding one another one person does not fall without causing others to fall; in like manner, in the moral order, especially in a community, an individual does not fall into an evil habit without causing others to fall likewise into the same; a gangrened member soon injures the others; the head suffers from the bad state of the stomach; one part of the body, however strong, is altered or weakened by its relations with a diseased part. A religious is bound, before all, to give a good example and avoid whatever may scandalize his brethren. "My son," said our Saviour one day to a holy religious, "help me to save souls." "How, Lord, can I help Thee in so holy and exalted a ministry?" "By thy prayers and good examples. Be faithful to thy Rule, a model of obedience, piety, charity, zeal, devotedness and good spirit to thy brethren, and thou wilt save them."

11. Finally, to love our neighbor is to honor and respect all our brethren: "Give honor to

all," says St. Peter. Esteem and respect all your brethren, because they form a part of your family; they have the same vocation as you; they are, like you, children of God, brethren, members and servants of Jesus Christ and joint heirs of the eternal glory, which you will one day share with them. Honor and respect all your brethren, who are all pious, conscientious, solidly virtuous. "Forestall one another with testimonies of honor and politeness," insists St. Peter, for such deference, when sincere, foment love as oil nourishes the flame of the lamp. Without these testimonies there is no fraternal charity. Every one is naturally pleased in being honored and respected, because of his secret consciousness of his worth, which makes him very sensitive to contempt and to whatever may affect his honor. Hence we love him who respects us and feel obliged to respect him also. Wherefore, he who honors and respects his brethren, will also be honored and respected by them. Let us, therefore, honor and respect our brethren, for they are the images of Jesus Christ. It was this thought that induced St. Apollonius to say to his religious that they should adore the brethren who visited them, for, said he, "you do not adore them, for your veneration is directed not to them, but to God who dwells in them; therefore, when you see your fellow-religious, you see your Lord and your God in them."

2. FRATERNAL CORRECTION OR ADMONITION. (C)

Ven. Father Champagnat, being deeply impressed with this saying of the Holy Ghost, "the Lord hath given charge to every one concerning his neighbor" (Eccli. 17.12), wished that his Brothers should guard and protect one another, and therefore made the following rule: "Never send out a Brother alone, but always with a companion; there shall be a glass partition between the class rooms; in their convents they should have a common study-room, refectory and dormitory, perform together all their spiritual exercises and studies; they should never be separated from one another, either by day or by night, at work and recreation, in going out to take a walk, or to church." This was intended as a rampart, as a protection against every kind of danger. The Rule, moreover, imposes on the Brothers the duty of fraternal correction, and of informing the Superior of the abuses introduced into the houses of the Institute, of the faults committed against the Rule and everything in the conduct of the Brothers that might give scandal or compromise the reputation of the community or any of its individual members.

Fraternal correction has two parts; the first

consists in giving good advice, charitable admonition to him who fails to correct his defects, or who easily breaks a rule; the second part consists in informing the Superior, if the admonition produces no effect. These points are found in the Rule of almost every religious Institute.

Ven. Father Champagnat called fraternal correction the safeguard of the virtue of the Brothers and the guardian of the Institute, declaring that it was owing to this charitable practice that many had escaped great dangers, and preserved their virtue and their vocation, and that many abuses had been prevented from taking root, for it enabled the Superior to correct them in time and to prevent them from spreading and being perpetuated.

Fraternal admonition is a proof of friendship. "To reprove and correct," says St. Clement, "is a mark of benevolence, and not of hatred." "He who reproves me, or causes me to be reprovèd," says St. John Chrysostom, "gives me a greater proof of friendship than he who praises or flatters me." "St. Francis de Sales," says one of his friends, "was wont often to reprove me for my defects, and then he would say to me: 'I wish you to be very thankful to me for this, for it is the best testimony of friendship which I can give you, and I will acknowledge that you love me, if you do me a like favor. I cannot bear to see in you the slightest imperfection, because I love you very much; what appears to me as mere flies in

others, seems to me like elephants in you, on account of my great affection for you?' "

He who, out of fear of causing pain to his fellow-religious, neglects to admonish him, or to make his fault known to the Superior, does not really love him; and we may even say that he hates him, since he allows him to perish, although he could save him. "If your Brother," says St. Augustine, "has a burning fever, you make use of all imaginable remedies to cure him; if violent remedies are necessary, he may cry out, resist and struggle, you pay no attention to his resistance, but make use of every means to oblige him to submit to all that is necessary for his cure, and in all this you act reasonably and charitably. But whence comes it that you act differently when your Brother's soul is sick? Why do you dissimulate his faults? Why do you conceal them from those whose duty it is to correct them? Why do you fear displeasing him by admonishing him, or having him admonished? Do you not know that love has a holy severity which remedies the evil in him, whether he be willing or unwilling? Do then for your Brother's soul, what you would do for his body, otherwise you are really cruel, fail against charity and may be guilty of the loss of the soul, whose faults and defects you dissimulate." "To conceal a Brother's fault from the Superior," says St. Basil, "is simply to hasten the death of one who is sick, to push into the precipice one who is running towards it." A sin

concealed is like an abscess which goes on increasing until it reaches the heart and causes death. It would be a great favor to lance it, and, on the contrary, a cruelty not to lance it. In like manner, it is not the act of a friend to conceal a Brother's fault from the Superior, since it would contribute to his loss and his spiritual death. Let us bear in mind that he who is governed by some passion, walks in darkness, for a thick veil covers his eyes.

Some dispense themselves from fraternal correction, saying: "I have enough to do with myself; I do not undertake to be the guardian of others and I never interfere with what concerns them." But you work for your own self in procuring your Brother's cure, for he is a part of the same Institute as you, and it conduces to the welfare of all the members of a body to assist one another. Is not the opposite conduct contrary to nature? Listen to St. Augustine: "If a thorn has entered the foot, all the members hasten to its help; the back bends, the eyes look for the thorn; if some one says: 'There it is,' the ears listen, and the hands endeavor to pull it out. You are the members of Christ's body, of the body of your Institute, and your brethren are also its members. Hence it happens that, when one of them falls into some fault that may cause his ruin, instead of helping him to amend, as one member helps the other, you, under the plea that you have enough to do in caring for yourself,

look at him coldly, neglect to help him, dissimulate his failings, indirectly excuse and approve them by your silence; such a conduct shows that you love neither your Brother nor yourself.

Some excuse themselves under the plea that they are not the guardians of others. He who speaks thus resembles Cain, the first reprobate. Have not God and your Rule given you charge of your brethren? If you neglect this charge, you shall have to answer for their souls, and become responsible for the faults you have not tried to prevent. "He who neglects fraternal admonition," says Ven. Father Champagnat, "shares in his Brother's faults. If there were no receivers of stolen goods, there would be but few thieves; wherefore the former are as guilty as the latter. In like manner, if in a community there were no receivers, that is, religious who, being without fraternal charity, cover up with a perfidious cloak of indulgence the faults of their brethren, instead of making them known to the Superior, there would never be any serious transgression of the Rule, and no abuse could be introduced into the Institute.

One of the Brothers, who had failed in this duty, feeling remorse for this, made his fault known to Father Champagnat. "You have done wrong," said the Father, "and repent of it, God be praised! Beseech our Lord to forgive you and the Brother, whose fault you concealed. If we wish to avoid regrets, let us always walk straight-

forward in our path; let human respect, or false indulgence, never cause us to lose sight of the glory of God and of the true interests of our brethren. Never forget that he who fails to inform the Superior in such cases, is wanting in charity, becomes guilty of the fault of him who strays from duty, and whom the Superior's admonition would probably have caused to amend. It now behooves you to repair the past by a greater fidelity to the Rule concerning fraternal charity."

Another says: "I never meddle with that Brother's concerns." "This," says St. John Chrysostom, "is a mistake and an untruth, for you meddle with it in a wrong way, when you help him to keep his fault concealed. What! you will not meddle with that Brother's business, and you would see him going astray without having the charity to cause him to be admonished, and yet you would consider yourself guiltless! The law of Moses commanded help to be given to the horse of an enemy, when it had fallen down; and your Brother's soul should be less precious to you than a beast of burden! I call upon Jesus Christ to witness that, by such conduct, you become guilty of the ruin of that Brother, and that God will demand of you an account of his soul."

Fraternal correction is, therefore, a duty of conscience for every religious, for a religious is bound to admonish charitably him who breaks a rule; to make known his failings to the Superior, if his private admonitions have produced no effect.

“If your brother will not hear you,” says our divine Saviour, “tell it to the Church,” that is, to the Superior. The omission of this duty may, in some cases, be even a mortal sin on account of the importance of the matter and of the injury it may cause the individual himself or even the whole community! We should, then, beware, through pusillanimity or the fear of displeasing him, of exposing him to compromise himself or the whole community. It is very wicked to conceal such faults from the Superior, for we owe it to our Institute, our Mother, to have at heart its interests and those of its members.

If there are some who, under some plea or other, are afraid to make use of fraternal correction, there are others who do not like to receive it and most strangely dread the disclosures made to the Superior. Such a disposition is a sure proof of a weak virtue and a lack of the desire to correct one's faults. A certain theologian compares these religious to the devil, because, like him, they are incorrigible; and what distinguishes such a sinner from the devil is that the former is yet capable of correction during his life, and the latter is eternally incapable of it. “Woe,” says the Holy Ghost, “to him who goes alone, for if he happens to fall into a pit, he will remain therein, having no one to help him out.” What does going alone mean? To hide one's defects and faults from the Superior. A good religious has nothing closed or locked up, not even his own heart,

which is always open to him whose office is to guide him. He goes alone who dreads and shuns correction, who is displeased when his faults are made known to his Superior. "Misery and ignominy," says the Holy Ghost, "to him who shuns reproof, for he shall be overwhelmed with evils and as covered with vices as an uncultivated field with weeds. He who hates reproof is a fool." Such a one cannot be pruned nor properly formed, and will become daily more imperfect, and wherever he is placed, he will either be of little or no account, or a scandal and stumbling-block for others.

If, when walking in an unknown path, you were told to stop, to retrace your steps, lest you should fall over a precipice or be exposed to be devoured by wild beasts or robbed by highway robbers, you would feel grateful for the admonition and thank from your heart your admonitor for his charity. Why, then, should you be displeased and irritated, when you are admonished to avoid doing certain things or to shun certain dangers, and say you know better, you know your own business, and are able to take care of yourself, and know how far you can go! You deceive yourself in saying this and forget the admonition of the Holy Ghost: "Rely not on thy own wisdom, for it is more frail than thou thinkest." You deceive yourself, when you imagine you understand your position better than he who charitably admonishes you, for, besides no one being judge in his own case, "it often

happens," says Abbot Joseph, "that the more learned and intelligent man is mistaken in what concerns him, whilst he who is less gifted, has a clearer insight into the matter. Therefore, let no one fancy he can get along without others, or that he needs no one to admonish him." God's greatest punishment in this life is to keep silent, to cease admonishing, correcting and chastising the guilty. Woe to the religious, whose Superior finds himself compelled to imitate God in this, for it is a proof that he despairs correcting that Brother's spiritual disease.

The good religious thinks differently, for he considers fraternal correction as one of the greatest benefits of the religious life. "Do you know," asks St. Francis de Sales, "what is a convent? It is the academy of exact correction, where every one must learn to allow himself to be handled, planed, polished and bent, and be made perfectly smooth and shining, that he may thus unite himself perfectly to God. It is also an hospital for the spiritually sick who desire to be cured, and, therefore, willingly submit to be bled, cut, burnt and operated upon, and to take bitter drugs; therefore religious were formerly called 'those who are getting cured.'" The good religious fully understands this truth and loves his convent as an academy of correction.

"To wish for correction," says St. Francis de Sales, "is an evident sign of wisdom and a sure mark of progress in virtue. In fact, as it is a

sign of a good stomach to digest coarse food easily, it is likewise a sign of the spiritual health and internal vigor of the soul to love to be admonished and reprov'd for our defects. When, therefore, we cheerfully accept admonitions, it is a strong proof that we are averse to all that is sinful, and that our faults proceed rather from inadvertence and human frailty than from malice and deliberation, and that we earnestly wish to amend. He who willingly accepts correction shows that he sincerely desires to acquire virtue. A sick person yearning after health, courageously takes the prescribed remedies, however bitter and disgusting they may be. The religious who truly strives after perfection, which consists in the soul's perfect health and holiness, finds nothing difficult to reach this end, and considers the wounds made by a good Superior, who, like a skilful surgeon, cuts only to cure, far preferable to the praises of a flatterer.

St. Augustine, the most learned man of his age, wrote to St. Jerome that he was willing to receive his admonitions and even those of the least of men. "I beseech thee," he wrote, "to be so kind as to admonish me fearlessly, whenever thou perceivest that I need it." We read in the "Life of St. Ambrose" that he thanked all who admonished him of his failings, and received their admonitions as singular favors. St. Ignatius Loyola was so convinced of the necessity of fraternal correction, that he made it a rule that the

General and the other Superiors of the Society should have each an admonitor specially charged with the duty of watching over their conduct and giving them charitable admonitions, whenever they should be necessary. A good Superior considers as testimonies of good will the admonitions and remarks of a holy freedom addressed to him by his subjects. This wise conduct protects him against many faults and mistakes, because he is guarded and admonished by as many individuals as he has subjects. Ribadineira, though only a youth fifteen years old, informed St. Ignatius, who was then an old man, that his preaching was made fun of on account of some mistakes in language, and that some of his ways excited the laughter of those who saw him. St. Ignatius, greatly pleased at this information, said to him: "You are right, Peter; I give you the charge of watching me in future and carefully noting down all my mistakes, and I promise I will try to avoid them."

He who sincerely desires to amend and aspires to perfection, would wish to be watched by every one, so that he may be kept in the right path and may more securely attain the end he proposes to himself. "Oh, that I had the advantage," said St. Bernard, "of having a hundred superiors watching over me and solicitous for my welfare, for the more I know that are guarding me in Jesus Christ, the more secure I feel. It is a strange folly to be angry because some one watches our

conduct; as for me, thank God, I feel more the teeth of the wolf than the shepherd's crook." All good religious agree with St. Bernard, love correction and cherish all who have the charity to admonish them, or to have them reproved by the Superior.

3. DETRACTION. (C)

“I beseech you,” said Ven. Father Champagnat to his community, “with all the affection of my soul and by all the affection you bear me, so to act, that holy charity may be always maintained among you. Love one another as Jesus has loved you; let there be among you but one heart and one soul, so that what was said of the early Christians may be said of you also: ‘Behold how they love one another.’ This is the most ardent wish of my heart.”

This fraternal love should be efficacious, and should have these four objects: First, to oblige one another on every occasion; secondly, charitably to admonish one another of their respective failings and of faults against the Rule; thirdly, charitable forbearance towards one another; fourthly, to excuse one another’s faults and carefully conceal them not only from outsiders, but also from other members of the community. Hence the Rule in some Institutes specially forbids relating elsewhere disedifying occurrences in the convent, communicating to one another little antipathies, aversions or difficulties concerning another member. “It is not less necessary,” says Ven. Father Champagnat, “to preserve the reputation of a fellow-religious among the rest

of the community than among outsiders. A religious has even greater right to the esteem of the former than to that of the latter. A religious who is disliked or unpopular only among the public, can console himself by the satisfaction of possessing the esteem and confidence of his brethren; but if he is disgraced in the eyes of those he lives with, the community life becomes for him a real torment, which he cannot bear without extraordinary virtue."

1. Therefore detraction is one of the greatest dangers of the religious life. One of the greatest benefits of the religious state is that it removes from us almost all the exterior dangers of offending God. Man is, however, so weak, that he nowhere finds a supreme and infallible preservative against sin, against even mortal sin. Hence the angels fell in heaven, man in the earthly paradise and Judas in the company of Jesus and the apostles. "Let us say even more and acknowledge the whole truth," declares Bourdaloue; "there are even certain mortal sins to which religious may even be more exposed than seculars, as the abuse of grace, sacrilege and faults against charity. In religion we are safer against covetousness and ambition, but more subject to murders, disputes, detraction, etc. But it matters little by what sin a person is damned, if he is unfortunate enough to lose his soul."

"Detraction," says St. John Chrysostom, "is the sin that is most easily committed; it is com-

mitted with the least remorse, and will be most severely punished. To commit other sins we need external, foreign means, but for detraction the will alone suffices and needs only the tongue, and this is why it is so easy to fall into it.” “There are very few, even among religious,” says St. Jerome, “who do not yield to detraction. Men have so strong a propensity to speak of one another, and to criticise the doings of others, that even those, who are free from other failings, yield to this one, and thus fall into the devil’s last and most dangerous snare. Let not religious believe themselves secure, saying: ‘We do not commit grievous sins in the monastery, for we do not kill or commit adultery.’ But I assure you that you commit a heinous sin, when you backbite your brethren, for you kill them with your tongue; it is, indeed, a great fault not to keep silent about the faults of your brethren in your community.”

“Have nothing to do with detractors,” says the Holy Ghost (Prov. 24. 21). Why? Because this vice exposes many to perdition. “We are, alas! blind to our own defects,” says St. John Chrysostom, “and all eyes for the failings of others and we speak of them out of mere pleasure. We thus precipitate ourselves into hell, not by the broad highway, but by by-paths unattractive in themselves. We faithfully keep the most difficult commandments, but forfeit our salvation by committing sins that can be easily avoided.” “Great

misfortunes," says Father St. Jure, "sometimes happen in religious houses; they who have spoken ill of their fellow-religious, made their failings known, published their faults, stigmatized their conduct, afterwards falsify their conscience, that is, make no account of these faults, do not confess them or only lightly without scruple, contrition or reparation. This is a clumsy self-deception, a fostering of secret sins and exposes their salvation to great danger."

Father Aquaviva, the fifth General S. J., proposed the following question, in secret consultation to all the Jesuits: "In what manner and in which way are the members of the Society most exposed to fail grievously against charity?" The immense majority replied that it was "through the sin of detraction." This was also his own private conviction, and therefore, in his "Treatise on the Means of Healing the Diseases of the Soul," he recommends that "those who have been guilty of detraction, should not retire to rest at night without previously going to confession." According to the views of prudent and learned men," says Cornelius à Lapide, "many are eternally lost on account of the sins of detraction and slander." Detraction is so much the more dangerous, as people reflect less upon it and consider it a mere trifle.

2. According to St. Thomas detraction is, in itself, a grievous sin. If its guilt is diminished by the levity of the matter, and by the want of ad-

vertence and full consent of the will, it is, nevertheless, one of the greatest venial sins, because it fails against both charity and justice. "In my opinion," says St. John Chrysostom, "the wickedness of the backbiter is greater than that of the thief, because the law of Christ which takes so great an interest in the love of our neighbor, cares more for souls than for the purse, and because detraction robs the neighbor of the most precious of natural goods, his good name."

Some backbiters excuse themselves under the plea that they only tell the truth and are not influenced by malice. "In vain do you feel convinced of the truth of what you say," observes St. John Chrysostom, "and that you do not yield to malice in this, you wound charity and are, therefore, guilty of sin. You shall be judged, not by what others do, but by what you say. What aggravates your fault, is that you cannot allege a good reason for your detraction." Other faults, though condemned by reason itself, may be excused or explained by some provoking causes. The voluptuary alleges his strong passions; the thief, his needs; the murderer, his anger; the drunkard, his thirst, his hard work. But the detractor has no plea to bring forward, no pecuniary interest, no alluring passion; in fact, no excuse!

And, nevertheless, with a few words, he makes a deeper wound in his neighbor than if he bit him with his teeth; he does irreparable injury

by destroying his neighbor's good name; he is more guilty than a murderer, and deserves greater punishment. "The detractor's tongue," says St. Bernard, "is a three-edged sword or spear, for it pierces three persons with one blow, the backbiter himself, the listener and him whom he backbites; he is a venomous viper, which poisons three persons with one bite." "We are so much the more obliged to avoid all detraction," says Father Champagnat, "as it is very easy to become guilty of grievous sin in speaking of our neighbor's defects and faults, first, because of a slight fault we often make a grievous one, or at least it grows always greater when spread from mouth to mouth (as shown by the example of "Three Black Crows"); secondly, because a defect or a fault, even if light in itself, which we manifest, may impart to our hearers a bad opinion of a fellow-religious, indispose against him the members of the community, rob him of their esteem, and become a cause of disagreement, disunion, troubles and disorders for a long time. Thirdly, because the detraction may excite in the heart of the victim hatred, aversion and resentment against the detractor, which years will not be able to blot out. Fourthly, because these faults are not scrupled, are taken for trifles, often not even mentioned in confession, expose to the danger of sacrilege, for often such faults, considered as light, are really grievous. Hence, under whatever aspect we consider them, these

faults against charity are very dangerous and should be most carefully avoided."

In fine, the detractor is extremely displeasing to God, for he is accursed, as the Holy Ghost tells us (Eccli. 28. 15). "God hateth him who soweth discord among the brethren" (Prov. 6. 19). Who sows discord and disunion? Is it not the detractor? Jesus repels the backbiter from His altar, saying: "Go first and be reconciled with thy brother," repair thy fault against him, "before making thy offering." The gravity of the detraction is measured, first, by the gravity or importance of the detractor and his intention, or the passion that moves him. Secondly, by the evil said. It is clear that it is a greater sin to manifest a grievous fault than a light one. Thirdly, by the number of listeners, for it is evident that a detraction made in presence of ten persons is more injurious than if it were made before one or two. Fourthly, by the effects or consequences of the detraction. And fifthly, by the quality or station of the victim. "Theologians," says Rodriguez, "teach that the narration of venial sin of our neighbor, if a secular, is only a light sin, because it does no great injury to his good name; but it may happen that the manifestation of a venial sin of a religious or of a priest, is a mortal sin, because certain venial sins disgrace a religious, a priest more than several mortal sins would disgrace a secular; for instance, to say that the former tell lies, are not

pious, are light-minded, imprudent, etc., does them more harm in the minds of the listeners, than to say of a layman that he did not keep the fast, or missed Mass." Therefore, the sin of detraction derives much of its malice from the quality of its victim. This is a powerful motive to restrain us from ever backbiting our superiors, or the clergy.

3. Detraction is the cause of very many evils. "Tell me," says St. John Chrysostom, "of a single evil that may not result therefrom. It begets quarrels, mistrust, dissensions, hatred, enmities, the ruin of families and the upheaval of cities." The detractor "hath troubled many that were at peace. The tongue of a third person hath disquieted many, and scattered them from nation to nation. It hath destroyed the strong cities of the rich, and hath overthrown the houses of great men, and undone strong nations" (Eccli. 28.15-18). The backbiter is terrible in his house, a mischief-maker among those living with him, sowing cockle everywhere. "He is," says St. Bernard, "a fox that destroys and ravages everything." "What do you think of detraction," asked a religious of the Abbot St. Agatho? "Detraction," he replied, "is a burning and violent wind, overthrowing and consuming everything in its way, knocking down the fruits of the tree of charity, and carrying everywhere disorder and destruction." "The backbiter," says St. Bernard, "is plague-stricken, a leper, communicating his diseases to others, and causing them to lose

their souls." "He is a public scourge," says St. Ambrose, "carrying desolation everywhere, as a river, overflowing its banks, ravages a whole region." "The religious," says Father St. Jure, S. J., "who are guilty of detraction, are like the sewers of a city gathering all its filth. All the imperfections and faults of a community are collected together in the mind of the religious addicted to detraction, and then they spread the stench thereof all over the convent; their mouth is an open grave filled with putrefying corpses exhaling a deadly infection."

Do you know to which race that religious belongs who speaks ill of his superiors, of his brethren? To the race of Cham, Noe's third son, who, instead of covering his father's nudity, made fun of it. He was cursed for it in his son; detractors also are cursed by God. The religious guilty of detraction is a great enemy of union and concord; there is nothing more dangerous in a community than such a one. A religious community cannot stand in which the inordinate license of speaking ill of others is tolerated. This is why the holy founders of religious Institutes were so severe concerning detraction. "Religious houses," says St. Francis of Assisi, "will perish, if this wicked vice is suffered to enter; wherefore the Guardians should use every precaution to prevent the spread of this terrible pest among us, and should severely punish those who have spoken ill of any of their brethren. He who has robbed

his Brother of his good name, shall be stripped of his habit, and shall not be permitted to pray with the brethren until he has repaired his fault." Whenever St. Pachomius heard some one speaking ill of others, he would flee from him as from a plague-stricken person. St. Bernard directed that such a one should be severely punished, and even expelled if he did not amend. St. Basil separated backbiters from the community, as persons afflicted with some contagious disease, and punished severely those who had listened to them. St. Jerome, in his Rule, directs backbiters to be shunned as if they were venomous serpents. "The religious who have a bad tongue," says St. Alphonsus, "ought to be expelled from the convent or shut up all their life in a dungeon, for they disturb silence, devotion, concord, the union and peace of their fellow-religious. If they are left free, they will soon ruin the community." St. Augustine had an inscription placed in the refectory warning against detraction. One day some clergymen dining with him, fell into this fault. The saint in vain endeavored to change the subject; he at last told them plainly that he would leave the refectory, if they continued to indulge in detraction.

The detractor prepares a miserable life for himself; all dread him; no one likes him; he has no true friends, because he is devoid of charity. Hence St. Peter, solicitous for the peace and happiness of all the faithful, wrote: "He that will

love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips, that they speak no guile" (1 Pet. 3.10). "But," says St. John Chrysostom, "it is not enough not to be guilty of detraction, it behooves us also to refrain from listening to it, for the one is as sinful as the other." "The backbiter," says St. Bernard, "has the devil on his tongue, but the listener has him in his ears."

What should we do when detraction is going on in our presence? In the first place, we should shun a detractor as much as we can, and when he begins backbiting some one in our presence, we should try to find some plausible pretext for going away. Secondly, if we possess any authority over him, we should reprove him; if he is our equal, we ought to remind him that he is doing wrong. Thirdly, if we cannot go away, let us seem to be asleep or inattentive; or if we put on a sad look, he may cease taking pleasure in saying what he perceives is disagreeable to us.

It is not necessary to say here that it is not detraction to inform the Superior, as the Rule prescribes, of the faults or defects of our brethren, that he may correct them, but an act of charity tending to their amendment.

4. SILENCE AND DISCRETION IN SPEECH. (C)

The tongue is the interpreter of the heart. "As the heart," says Cornelius à Lapide, "so the tongue." If we wish to know what a man is, we have only to listen to what he says, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," says our divine Saviour (Mat. 12. 34). "Young man," said Socrates, "speak, that I may know you, your speech will be the mirror of your soul." If a vessel full of filth is uncovered, it will spread noxious odors. In like manner, an evil heart allows its corruption to escape through the mouth, poisoning and defiling all that come in contact with it. On the contrary, a vessel containing a delicious perfume spreads a sweet odor. Such also is the action of the tongue of one who is pure of heart and innocent in soul. The odor exhaled from a vessel denotes its contents. In like manner, the tongue makes known the soul with its good or evil qualities.

He who is fond of conversing about trifles, shows that he is light-minded, frivolous and imprudent; if he delights in unbecoming words, in words of double-meaning, it is a proof that lust is boiling in his inmost heart, whence it overflows; if he finds pleasure in backbiting his neighbor, it

is an indication that his heart is devoid of charity, justice and conscience; if he indulges in boasting, in domineering over others, it shows that pride is his predominant passion. In short, a man's speech indicates the kind of heart and soul he possesses. As the Spaniard speaks Spanish, the German, German, the Englishman, English, in like manner, he whose soul is heavenly, speaks of things heavenly, and he whose soul is earthly, speaks of things earthly. "The mouth of the wicked overfloweth with evils" (Prov. 15. 28), says the Holy Ghost.

Silence is prescribed in the Rule of every Religious Institute, in order to maintain therein recollection, piety, regularity, peace, charity and love of work.

1. Silence is necessary to avoid sin. "He that useth many words shall hurt his own soul" (Eccli. 20. 8). The talkative religious will not avoid sin, for "sin aboundeth in a multitude of words" (Prov. 10. 19). "I am persuaded," says St. Ambrose, "that loquacity and the transgression of silence are, for religious, the shipwreck of innocence and a cause of daily falls and faults, because it is very difficult to speak without offending God." Holy Job doubted very much whether a great talker could be justified, for such a one cannot keep his soul sinless, for, asks the Holy Ghost, "who is there that hath not offended with his tongue?" (Eccli. 19. 17).

"The tongue," says St. Bernard, "although

only a small member, nevertheless, is capable of doing great injury. It licks by flattering, bites by backbiting, and kills by lying. Oh, how true it is that we cannot speak much without committing sin! When, because of some necessity, I had permission to speak with some one, I would speak not only necessary but also unnecessary things, and uttered vain, useless and funny things, and in a multitude of words that defile the tongue through detraction I have wickedly lessened the good opinion people had of the virtuous; I never related things as I saw them; I affirmed one thing instead of another, or I altered, exaggerated, or polished it. In a word, my tongue has done me greater harm than any other member of my body." St. James calls the tongue "a world of iniquity," and says that no other organ of our body helps the devil so much as our tongue to cause us to commit sin.

Why did Satan, when he struck Job in his whole body, spare his tongue? Because, knowing that the tongue is the source of numberless sins, he expected to induce Job to use it in order to offend God. According to the Old Law the vase that was uncovered, was reputed unclean. This is a figure which teaches us that the soul, whose mouth is not closed by silence, is soiled by the impurities of sin. A religious keeps himself free from sin by means of silence, and commits many sins when he indulges in useless conversation. "For thirty years," said St. Sisoës to his disciples, "I

have besought the Lord with tears to preserve me by His grace from sin, from every evil deed, but notwithstanding my tears and prayers, I have not yet succeeded in wholly regulating my tongue, and I daily sin in speech." "The greatest number of sins," says St. Alphonsus, "proceeds from speaking or from hearing others speak." Alas! how many religious will be reprobated on the day of judgment for not having observed silence! Anacharsis, being asked what is the most wicked and dangerous thing in man, replied: "His tongue." Hence the Fathers of the desert asserted that he who knows not how to govern his tongue, will never overcome his carnal passions.

2. Silence is necessary to live piously. "Three things are necessary for a religious," says the holy Abbot St. Agatho: "The keeping of silence, love of prayer and the surrender of his will." But without the first he will never acquire the other two. The spouse of the Canticle says that "she had closed her door and conversed with her Beloved." This means that she had kept profound silence, separated herself from creatures and renounced all human consolations, in order to deserve to converse with God. "The talkative religious," says St. Ambrose, "easily loses the unction of piety, and the sentiments of virtue flow out through his mouth as water from a vase full of holes. As the heat escapes from an open oven, so also good thoughts evaporate from our mind through much speaking." "Experience," says

St. Gregory, "shows that those who are addicted to mental prayer, become deaf and dumb concerning earthly things, and cannot bear to speak about them or listen to them, because they wish to converse only about that which they love." Moses, by conversing with God, almost lost the use of his speech. As soon as Jeremias had begun conversing with the Lord, he exclaimed that he was only a child, and could not speak with men. "It is not less true," says St. Alphonsus, "that they who converse much with creatures, converse but little with God, because they do not know how to do so." Without silence there is no recollection, no fervor, no spirit of compunction; without silence prayer becomes impossible or is full of distractions. Moreover, he who is loquacious, commits at least many venial faults; but wilful venial sin is one of the greatest hindrances to divine communication; it defiles the soul; it resembles a kind of spiritual leprosy, disfiguring and deforming the soul in the sight of God, who then turns away from her and leaves her subject to distractions and her own weakness. Venial sin grieves the Holy Ghost, obstructs His operations in the soul, nullifies her good dispositions. The soul then becomes a prey to disgust and dryness, and prayer becomes as a torment to her. Wherefore, it is a sure truth that, to live piously, we must observe silence and live in recollection.

3. Silence is necessary to live virtuously. Silence nourishes, increases and perfects all virtues.

The ancient anchorites considered the breaking of the rule of silence as a dangerous fault, and punished it severely. St. Arsenius, having asked God what he should do to be saved, heard a voice saying to him: "Flee from men and keep silence." After spending many years in solitude, he again asked what he should do to acquire great virtue and attain perfection. He again heard the same voice saying: "Flee from men and keep profound silence." "He that offendeth not in word," says St. James, "is a perfect man." "On the contrary," says St. Bernard explaining this text, "he who knows not how to restrain his tongue, is not only not perfect, but is devoid of virtue." According to St. Odo, the life and actions of a religious, however good they may appear, deserve no esteem and should be accounted as nothing, if he does not govern his tongue. According to St. Peter Damian, the religious maintains himself in virtue and purity of heart by means of silence and recollection, and he loses both when he speaks without necessity. Dussaut, therefore, does not hesitate to assert that to break silence and be a bad religious are about one and the same thing; this is also the teaching of St. Isidore, for he says that loquacity, the habit of joking and dissipation of mind are sure signs of a vain and inordinate conscience, of levity, and of a soul weak and devoid of virtue.

St. Thomas, having been asked by what sign can a truly virtuous man be known, replied: "By

the spirit of prudence and reflection. If you see a religious taking delight in idle talk, in raillery, in worldly trifles, beware of esteeming him as a spiritual man, were he even to perform miracles, because his virtue lacks a solid foundation."

"I have been informed," wrote St. Jerome to a friend, "that you have left the world and become a religious. You have thus built a strong and solid wall to protect yourself against the enemies of your salvation; but I know you well enough to be sure that you have left a gate in that wall through which the devil can enter. I mean your defect of speaking too much. That gate is your mouth. If you wish to be secure against your enemies and persevere in your vocation, close that gate and govern your tongue, otherwise you will do nothing good and will run the risk of committing many faults." "Not a word was heard during the reconstruction of the temple of Jerusalem," says St. Peter Damian; "this means that the edifice of the virtues and perfection is raised by means of silence." "Silence guards the heart," says St. Francis de Sales, "and makes the soul more clear-sighted and intelligent. It is the germ of holy thoughts, of generous and heroic deeds, and inflames the heart with divine love."

4. Silence is necessary to give edification and preserve the regular discipline. One of the principal intentions of religious in placing themselves under one and the same Rule is to assist, edify and induce one another to practise virtue.

But a religious dissipated in mind, who does not observe silence, instead of edifying and assisting his brethren to practise virtue, disturbs and deranges them, and becomes to them a stumbling-block and an occasion of falls and sins. You ask me," says St. Bernard, "what I think of the religious who by his evil example causes them to become relaxed, or disturbs them by his irregularities, worries them by his loquacity, murmurs and frequent transgressions of silence. I say that he grieves the Spirit of God dwelling in them, persecutes the virtuous and wars against Jesus Christ." "The religious who is dissipated in mind, gives joy to the devil," says St. Joseph Calasancius. "He even does more than this," says St. Alphonsus, "for he also performs the office of the devil, since he prevents others from keeping silence and from remaining in the presence of God. Talkative religious are the familiar devils of convents, and do immense injury which they will know only after their death." St. Ignatius Loyola looked upon the habit of breaking silence as a fault sufficiently great to dismiss a subject, because of the scandal he gives and the injury he causes to his fellow-religious. St. Bernard says that it were better for such a one never to have become a religious, and that he should be sent back to the world for, "if he perished in the world, he would not be condemned to so terrible a punishment as he would receive, if he perished in religion; for he who fails to edify can expect

nothing else than a terrible condemnation, for, as St. Paul says, were his body given up to be burnt, he could not avoid being lost." "This is perfectly true," says the learned Mabillon, "for a religious community cannot subsist without practising silence; wherefore all founders of religious Institutes have placed the rule of silence in the first rank as a rampart against danger."

St. Dominic called silence the foundation of his Order. "It is forbidden to break silence," he says, "and the religious must consider it a fault to speak without necessity. Silence is called one of the chief pillars of religious houses; if it gives way, everything in it crumbles to pieces. Silence is the capital point of religious discipline; without it there can be no order in the community." St. Ignatius looked upon the faithful observance of silence in a convent as an indubitable proof that all the virtues flourished therein. "If you wish to know," he would say, "whether piety and the solid virtues reign in a religious community, you have only to examine whether silence is observed therein. All the virtues dwell in a convent in which there is recollection." Fleury in his Church History, confirms this, saying that in the convents where silence is most rigorously kept, the best discipline and the most perfect virtue are found.

Dom Calmet, who had thoroughly studied this point, asserts that nothing contributed more to the loss of the good spirit and the destruction of

religious communities than the neglect of the prescribed silence. When a relaxation in this point has once taken place, only calamities are to be expected. Being profoundly convinced of this truth, St. Laurence Justinian says: "The religious who neglects the rule of silence, cannot avoid wounding his conscience and falling into sin, for, by his bad example, he weakens the regular discipline and opens the gate to relaxation." St. Francis de Sales, with all his meekness, does not hesitate to say: "To refuse to keep silence is to wish to disturb and overthrow order and the very Institute, or Congregation; to despise the Holy Ghost, who has prescribed it to religious houses." From all the above we must conclude that, in whatever way we consider it, the Rule of Silence is one of the most important for religious.

5. HOW TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN UNION IN A COMMUNITY. (C)

“A man,” said Ven. Father Champagnat one day, “may be solidly virtuous, and yet by nature, possess a disagreeable character.” The defective character of one religious is capable of disturbing the union of a whole community and causing much suffering. A religious may be regular, pious, zealous for his sanctification, truly love God and his neighbor, without possessing the perfection of charity, that is, those little virtues which are the fruits, the *decorum* and the crown of charity. And yet, without the daily and habitual practice of these little virtues, there is no perfect union in a community. Their neglect, or their absence, is the great and, I may say, the sole cause of dissensions, divisions and discord among men. These little virtues are the following:

1. *Indulgence* towards our neighbor. This virtue excuses and diminishes the faults of others, and very easily forgives them, although we cannot expect such forgiveness for our own. St. Bernard is an example of an indulgent spirit. He was wont to say: “My dear brethren, whatever you may do to me, I have resolved always to love you, even if you did not love me. I will, therefore, cling to you even in spite of you. If you in-

sult me, I will be patient; I will bow my head to insults and overcome your ill-treatment with benefits; I will forestall those who refuse my care; I will do good to the ungrateful; I will honor those who despise me, for we are members of one another."

2. *Charitable dissimulation*, which seems not to perceive the neighbor's defects, wrongs, feelings, ill-advised expressions, and bears all without word or complaint. Dissimulate, "bear with the defects of your brethren," says St. Paul. Why does he not say: Reprove, correct, punish, but support, "bear with"? Because, in general, we have not the mission to correct, as the Superiors have; hence our duty extends only to bear with them. Also because, even when we have reproved and corrected some one, we must still bear with him, for there are defects that can be corrected only by dint of patience and forbearance. There are even virtuous souls that do not amend in spite of all efforts. To such God leaves their defects, in order to exercise their virtue and that of their brethren.

3. Compassion which appropriates to itself the sufferings of others, in order to sweeten them. The compassionate weep with those who weep, sympathize with the troubles of others and do all they can to relieve them. In like manner, a *holy cheerfulness* appropriates to itself the joys of the happy, in order to increase them and to procure for their brethren all the consolations and hap-

pineness of virtue and the community life. St. Paul offers us an admirable example of charity putting on all forms in order to be useful to the neighbor. He was all to all, wept with the weeping, rejoiced with the joyful, was weak with the weak, was all on fire when scandal had been given to any one, and took all forms to serve men and gain them for Jesus Christ. In like manner, St. Cyprian said to his people: "Brethren, I sympathize with you in all your sorrows, and I take part in all your joys; I have been infirm with the infirm. My love for you enables me to feel all your pains as well as to share all your joy."

4. *Suppleness of mind.* He who possesses this quality, does never, without serious reasons, impose his views on others, but unresistingly adopts what is judicious in the views of a fellow-religious, and without envy applauds his sentiments, his discoveries, in order to preserve union and fraternal charity. The Holy Ghost admonishes us to avoid disputes. But we sometimes hear some one say: "I am right, and I cannot bear the absurd views, or reasons, of N. N." But I say, listen to the learned Cardinal Bellarmine: "An ounce of charity is worth more than a hundred pounds of reasons." You may give or explain your views to keep up the conversation; but after doing so, allow others to combat them without your trying to defend them, for it is far better, in doubtful or indifferent matters, to yield and conform to the views of others. St. Eligius says that in such matters he

who yields gains the victory, for he is superior to the others in virtue. St. Ephrem, for peace' sake, always yielded in discussions. St. Joseph Calas Sanctius was wont to say: "He who desires peace, should not contradict others."

5. *Charitable solicitude*, which forestalls the wants of others to spare them the pain of feeling them and the humiliation of asking for help. A good heart can refuse nothing, is always on the alert to please and oblige others. St. Hugh, bishop of Grenoble, was accustomed at certain times to withdraw to La Grande Chartreuse to live as a simple religious under St. Bruno. As the Carthusians live two in each cell, Brother William, on one occasion, was assigned to him as companion. But Bro. William complained greatly to St. Bruno of the holy bishop for performing, in spite of him, all the meanest and most laborious tasks, and acting more as a servant than as a companion, for making himself the Brother's servant. Wherefore he besought St. Bruno to divide the tasks equally between them. But the holy bishop begged St. Bruno to allow him to satisfy his devotion and act as the Brother's servant.

6. *Affability*, which listens to the importunate without showing weariness, and is ever ready to give help to all who ask it, and to instruct the ignorant in all patience. St. Vincent de Paul is a rare example of this virtue. He would interrupt a conversation with persons of distinction, in

order to repeat four or five times the same thing to questioners of a dull mind, and to repeat it the fifth time as calmly and tranquilly as the first time. Without a shadow of impatience he would listen to poor people talking long and at random, and when overburdened with work, allow himself to be interrupted even thirty times in one day by scrupulous persons who would come to him to repeat the same thing to him over and over again, and he would patiently listen to them, and sometimes would even write down for them what he had said and explain it to them in full, if they failed to understand his meaning; he was ever ready to interrupt the recitation of the Divine Office and his sleep, in order to assist his neighbor.

7. *Civility, or politeness*, which induces us to forestall every one with marks of respect, regard and deference, and everywhere to yield the precedence to honor others. St. Paul admonishes us to prevent one another with marks of honor. Such marks foster mutual love, as oil feeds the lamp and the flame that gives light. Without them there is no fraternal union and charity. Every one naturally takes pleasure in being honored, for every one has a secret feeling, or conviction, of his excellence, which makes him very sensitive to contempt, to all that concerns his honor; wherefore, whenever he sees himself treated with respect, he feels obliged to treat others in the same manner. "Love," says St.

John Chrysostom, "and you shall be loved; praise others, and you shall be praised; respect others, and they shall respect you; yield willingly to others, and they also shall treat you with deference. Do not ill-treat any one; be not wanting in due regard to others. Beware of despising even one of your brethren, or of behaving harshly towards him on account of his defects. Do you turn your hand, your foot into ridicule when they are covered with sores or wounds, or if they are ill-formed, or soiled? Do you not then, on the contrary, take greater care of them and treat them more carefully than if they were sound?"

8. *Condescension*, which easily yields to the desires of others, bends to please or humor inferiors, easily listens, and seems to be satisfied with the reasons alleged, although they may not be convincing. "To be condescending," says St. Francis de Sales, "is to adapt oneself to every one, as far as the divine law and right reason permit. It is to be, like a piece of soft wax, susceptible of all forms, provided they are good; it is not to seek one's own interests, but those of the neighbor and the glory of God." Condescension is the daughter of charity; but it should not be confounded with a certain weakness of character which prevents those in authority from reproof and duly punishing the faults of their subjects, for, in such a case, it would be, not an act of virtue, but a participation in their faults. Condescension with the humors of others and forbearance were the fa-

vorite virtues of St. Francis de Sales; and he counseled them to all who were under his direction. He would often say that it is easier and quicker to accommodate ourselves to the wishes of others, than to endeavor to make others yield to our humor or our notions. Although no one was more meek and complacent than he, nevertheless, he was, at the same time, very ingenious and courageous in correcting and reproving.

9. *Devotedness* to the common welfare, which tends to prefer the interests of the community and even of individuals to our own, and which sacrifices itself for the good of the brethren and the prosperity of the community.

10. *Patience*, which is silent and bears, bears, bears always, and is never weary of doing good even to the ungrateful. St. Eucherius, the abbot, was so patient, that he would even thank those who made him suffer. The hot-tempered man is like one in a high fever; the patient man is like a physician who moderates the fever, and restores happiness and peace to those who had lost them through anger. Avoid becoming impatient at and worrying over the defects of others. "If you saw a man casting himself into a pit," says St. Bonaventure, "would it be wise for you to cast yourself into another?" Bear, then, in all patience your neighbor's imperfections, defects and importunities; this is the true means of having peace and preserving union with all in the community.

11. *Equanimity*, or evenness of character,

which makes us always the same, prevents us from yielding to immoderate joy, to irritability, wearisomeness, melancholy, ill-humor, but keeps us always cheerful, in good humor, affable and contented with everything.

These little virtues are social virtues, that is, extremely useful to those who live in community. Without them the little world we live in cannot be well governed, and will always be in continual trouble and agitation. Without them there is no domestic peace, which is the first relief amid the trials of this vale of tears. Oh, unhappy convent, in which no regard is paid to the little virtues! Superiors and subjects, young and old, live in discord. Without the love and practice of these virtues, even three religious cannot live well together under the same roof. Without charity and the practice of these little virtues a convent is more like a penitentiary, a hell on earth! If you wish it to be a heaven by the union of hearts, love and faithfully practise these virtues, for they make up the happiness of a religious community.

The first motive for practising them is the weakness of our neighbor. Yes, all men are weak, and, therefore, there are so many little defects in every community. One member is suspicious and analyzes all that is said and done; another is sensitive, and is everywhere pursued by the idea that others are opposed to him, mistrust him, seek to injure him, etc. A third is despondent; the least thing casts him down, makes him gloomy,

melancholy, burdensome to himself and others. A fourth, like powder, ignites and explodes at the least word, etc. In fine, each one has his weak point, is subject to many little defects and failings, which should be borne constantly, for they constantly furnish the occasion of practising the little virtues. It is just and reasonable to spare what is weak, and necessary to bear all the weakness of our neighbor.

A second motive for practising the little virtues consists in the levity, or lightness of the defects which we have to bear. The majority of religious are exempt, on account of their virtue and education, from coarse habits or defects. What we have to bear in our brethren are only imperfections, little fits of character, and weaknesses which do not prevent them from being chosen souls, from possessing fine qualities, solid virtue, or from being very conscientious. Oh, how easy it is for a man of virtue and common sense to put up with such imperfections and weaknesses in such souls!

The third motive is not only the lack of grievousness in the fault of our fellow-religious, but even the absence of moral fault or sin. In fact, we have to bear in them things indifferent in themselves, free from all guilt. For instance, certain features, a certain physiognomy, an unpleasant voice, disagreeable manners, a physical or a moral infirmity that repels us; also diversity of characters. One is naturally serious, another,

joyful; one is timid, another, bold; one is too slow and keeps us waiting; another is quick, impulsive, impetuous and, would make us go as fast as steam, electricity. Reason itself requires us to live in peace amid this discord of natural qualities and to accommodate ourselves to each one by yielding, by patience and condescension. To allow ourselves to be disturbed by this diversity of characters is just as unreasonable as to get angry because another is fond of a certain kind of food which is not to our taste.

The fourth motive is that we all need forbearance on the part of others. No one is so wise or accomplished as to be able to dispense with the indulgence of others. To-day I must bear patiently with so and so, and to-morrow so and so, or some one else, will have to bear patiently with me. How unjust it is to require others to exercise forbearance towards us, and to respond thereto rudely or haughtily! Can we say that we have no defects, that others can find nothing displeasing in us? Here is the answer given to a religious, who was vain enough to imagine this: "Brother, although you consider yourself perfect, and I hold you to be a good religious, I assure you that I have much to suffer from you. You want only fresh bread, because you have no teeth, and I cannot bear it, for it causes me indigestion, and I would like to eat hard bread; you order the soup to be served hot and scalding, and I like it cold; you forbid salad to be served on account

of your weak chest, and for me it is the greatest sacrifice not to have some; you will have only cooked fruit served at table, and I like it only raw, or even half-green; you cannot stand a draught and order all the windows closed, and I, if I would do as I feel like, would keep all the doors and windows open. During recreation you want to sit down all the time, and I would like to walk about. There are many other things you do through taste or necessity, which greatly fatigue and displease me. You are much mistaken, if you think that no one has anything to bear from you, for I can assure you that, notwithstanding your great virtue, which I revere, you are for me a continual occasion of sacrifices and forbearance; but I do not complain, because I have my own defects, and I need that you should kindly bear with them."

The fifth motive consists in the bonds that unite us with the persons towards whom it is our duty to exercise forbearance. Abraham said to Lot: "There should be no strife between us, for we are brethren." Oh, the beautiful and touching reason! Those with whom we have to bear are our brethren in Jesus Christ. We are all children of one father (mother), of our founder, of our Mother, the Blessed Virgin. Let us listen to the words of Ven. Father Champagnat to his Brothers: "Could our beloved Mother Mary see with indifference that we harbor in our heart some grudge or aversion against one of our brethren,

whom she perhaps loves more than us? Oh, I conjure you, do not thus pain and afflict her maternal heart!" Those we have to bear with are the friends of Jesus Christ, have the same vocation as we, form but one family with us, have the same object as we; they are our assistants in the same employment, and are our co-workers in the same ministry. Oh, how many reasons have we not, therefore, for loving them, obliging them, and bearing with them in all patience!

The sixth reason is the excellence of these virtues. I regret having called them *little* virtues. But St. Francis de Sales calls them so. They are little only because they concern only little things, such as a word, a gesture, a look, an act of politeness, etc. But if we examine their principle and their end, or object, they are very great. For a good religious their practice is a continual exercise of charity towards the neighbor; but charity is the greatest and most excellent of virtues. It is the exercise of these little virtues which makes men solidly virtuous, and this is a very appropriate motive to cause us to love them and to facilitate their practice.

6. PEACE AND UNION IN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES. (C)

It would be a miracle if peace and union were never altered or disturbed in a religious community, for human nature is the same everywhere, in religion and in the world. And where a number of persons live together there will occur, at least now and then, faults that will threaten peace and union among themselves. Ven. Father Champagnat gives the following reasons for this.

1. In the first place, *the diversity of characters*. "Man," says St. Gregory, "is the most diversified being on earth." You will never find two alike in physiognomy and form; and this difference of features in their figures and forms, is found equally in their characters. Men have very different inclinations and tastes; one is amiable, another is rude; this one has a character full of simplicity and candor that charms; another has one that is hidden, dissimulating and uncommunicative, which renders him unbearable. This one loves union and concord, is always contented, tranquil, at peace with himself and others; another is fond of strife and discord, forever discontented, uneasy, ill-humored, and everywhere finds something to blame, and, as the Holy

Ghost says, his hand is raised against every one, and he is unable to agree with others. Jacob was meek and peaceable; he had a happy character, suited to preserve peace. Esau had a harsh, unaccommodating and quarrelsome character; his father prognosticated that he would live in quarrels and carry on war as long as he lived.

Defective characters are not rare in communities; some are sarcastic and mocking, mimics of the words, gestures and actions of others, in order to make them ridiculous. Others are proud, disdainful, contemptuous, esteeming and approving their own deeds only, unable to bear to hear their fellow-religious praised, and always finding means to lower or humble them. Others blame without due restraint, judge precipitately even what they do not understand, speak boldly without discerning the age, quality and merit of persons. Others have rude and uncouth manners, treat one another without respect, without politeness. All these have disagreeable characters which foment discord and tend to ruin charity and perfect union.

2. In the second place, the *lack of zeal for one's perfection*. In religious houses are found men full of talents and good qualities, who, however, are not solidly virtuous nor fit for anything great, but are incompetent for their employment or office and cause numberless troubles in the community. And why? Because they are un-

faithful to grace; they dread doing violence to themselves; they will not adopt the means necessary to reform their character, to correct certain little defects, some eccentricity that spoils them, or renders them disagreeable. Hence their talents and good qualities become useless to them, or serve only to lead them astray, and to excite trouble in the community. If the smallest part of the mechanism of a watch is broken, the watch stops. In like manner, a single uncorrected defect, the neglect of striving to subdue a passion, an erroneous view not laid aside, and many other similar things, suffice to paralyse all the good qualities of a man, to render all his labors unfruitful, and make him an occasion of trouble, a source of discord, because he is everywhere deficient, has defects burdensome to others; he is not what he ought to be and could be. Wherefore it is certain that a tepid religious is a cause of troubles, divisions, of the ruin of charity and of the perfect union of hearts.

3. *The harshness of the human heart and its inclination to severity.* Man is naturally prone to evil, to believe evil of others rather than good, to exaggerate in his mind the faults of his neighbor and even to increase their number; he can see their faults clearly and take no notice of their virtues. Hence St. Thomas asserts that meekness and charity towards others are virtues rarer than chastity. Who can say of himself that he has never failed against charity? St. John, filled

with a spirit opposed to that of Jesus Christ, wished to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans of a certain place. St. Peter placed himself above the other apostles in courage: "Even if all forsook Thee, I will not." St. Paul separates himself from Mark and Barnaby on account of some disagreement. St. John Chrysostom and St. Epiphanius said harsh things to each other. St. Bernard at first was so severe towards his subjects as to discourage them. O perfect charity, how rare art thou! The wickedness of man's heart, his want of charity, such is the chief cause of divisions and dissensions in religious houses!

4. *Human weakness, or personal defects.* A religious community is like a tree in blossom. A part of the blossoms fall off, whilst another clings to the branches, remains there and bears fruit. But what a difference between the fruits of the same tree! Some are beautiful and sound; a small number are magnificent in size and color; others are small, thin and spotted; and others are worm-eaten, wither and fall off. What does this mean? The blossoms that are carried away by the wind are the novices who do not persevere. The lean and puny fruits are the religious who are tepid and unfaithful to grace, and slowly drag themselves along in the practice of virtue. The fine fruits represent the many religious who are fervent, regular and truly virtuous. The very finest, largest, spotless and exempt from defects

are the chosen souls of heroic virtue, fulfilling their vocation perfectly; they are the real treasures of the community. And nevertheless, all these religious, being human, are a source of suffering to others. Even the greatest saints afford matter for patience to those who live with them, for the most perfect is he who has the fewest defects. A rose-bush, although bearing more and sweeter-scented roses and spreading greater perfume than any other, is not without thorns. In communities the wiser and more virtuous, who spread an odor of greater sanctity, do and say certain things and act in certain ways, which do not suit or please every body, do not agree with the characters and views of all, and for many are sharp, stinging and painful thorns. The worm-eaten fruits that wither and rot, represent sinful and apostate religious. In all Institutes there are found individuals who try the patience of the good and fervent. In Adam's family there was a fratricide, Cain, in Abraham's, a wild and vicious Ismael who tried to corrupt Isaac; in Isaac's an Esau reprobated by God; in that of David, an incestuous and parricidal Absalom, in the apostolic college, a Judas.

The Church, according to St. Jerome, is represented by Noe's ark, which contained the wolf and the sheep, the lion and the lamb, the crow and the dove, in a word, animals of all kinds, both clean and unclean. Religious communities are like the threshing-floor mentioned in the Gospel,

on which the wheat is mingled with the chaff; also like the net containing good and bad fish; like the feast at which were seated some who had no wedding garment; like the ten virgins, some of whom were wise and the others foolish; as a fine mansion containing utensils of gold and silver, of wood, clay and iron; also like the field sown with good seed and cockle. Wherefore St. Augustine declares that as long as the Church remains on earth, as the wheat suffers and groans among the chaff, as the good grain grows alongside of the cockle, as the vessels of mercy are among the vessels of wrath, we shall never lack adversaries to make us suffer and disturb our peace. A single bad religious is sufficient to mar fraternal union and exercise the patience of all the members of a community.

5. *Difference of views and appreciation of things.* It often happens that the good innocently combat one another and cause pain to one another, either through natural antipathy or different ways of judging, or especially on account of the small capacity or narrowness of the human mind, which looks at things only under certain aspects and thus makes mistakes of judgment without any moral guilt, although others considering the same thing under another aspect, would judge the matter to be sinful. People often misunderstand one another; and the truth is that each one is right, whilst, for want of a proper explanation, each one seems to be wrong. Baro-

nus thus relates the dispute between Sts. Epiphanius and Chrysostom, as a suitable instance of this matter: E. I will never tolerate the Origenists.—C. I will never confound the innocent with the guilty.—E. Origenism is so black and infamous a crime, that it behooves Christians to stifle those vipers of the Church.—C. A good judge never condemns the accused without a hearing.—E. You are too particular in this case.—C. You are too hot about it and have not the patience to find out the truth.—E. Patience? It is rather want of sense on your part and dissimulation.—C. No; but it is precipitation and violence on your part.—E. Are you afraid to condemn heretics?—C. But are you not afraid of condemning the wrong party and envelop in your condemnation the innocent with the guilty?—E. I see that you are an Origenist.—C. And I fear that you side with those who oppose the truth.—E. I am now going, and I tell you from God that you shall not die in Constantinople, and that you shall die in exile.—C. And from God I declare to you that you shall not reach your diocese but shall die on sea on your way to it. Both were saints and true prophets, both were right, and yet seemed to be somewhat in the wrong. Divine Providence permits such things in His saints, that they mistrust and humble themselves, acknowledge their weakness and ignorance, and avoid obstinacy in their opinions. Wherefore we need not be astonished if disputes and dissensions

sometimes arise in the most edifying communities.

6. *The frailty of union.* That men of such diversity of character, subject to so many defects, and obliged to live constantly together, should never do or say anything that is apt to disturb peace and union among themselves, would be a real miracle. Their spirits being so dissimilar, their views being often so opposed to one another, it naturally follows that their thoughts, affections and tastes should greatly differ. The one esteems what the other considers as blameworthy; what one condemns, another admits as tenable; what pleases some, is repugnant to others. All those who know how to write, form the same letters, but no two form them exactly alike. The same applies to opinions, judgments and affections. Need we, then, be astonished, if sometimes little clouds should rise up and disturb the peace? A man of common sense and virtue is not astonished at such miseries any more than at the changes in the weather, or at the diversity of objects in a landscape. Moreover, although such little disturbances are unavoidable, it is easy to render them less frequent and thereby preserve peace and union among ourselves as much as possible. In order to succeed in this, let us follow the counsels of the Holy Ghost.

1. In the first place, let us imitate St. Paul saying: "I seek to please all in all things." He who wishes to live in peace in the community should,

like him, adapt himself to the different characters of his fellow-religious, be full of condescension, bend easily, according to circumstances, not only in some things, but in all. In music different tones produce a sweet harmony. In like manner, in a community, although the characters differ, they ought, by means of condescension, and the spirit of charity, to produce an agreeable harmony. "I seek to please all in all things," of course, in which there is nothing sinful, and only in things good and indifferent; for where there is question of offending God, we must say, like St. Paul, "if I pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ."

2. "You being wise, bear with the imprudent" (1 Cor. 11. 19), with the weak of mind and the imperfect. It is only he who has a powerful reason that can bear with what is contrary to reason. It is an evident sign of a great capacity of mind, of a higher intelligence, of a sure and deep judgment, to be able to understand man's nature and be convinced that he is only a compound of weaknesses, defects, miseries and imperfections of all kinds, and to know how to bear it all. Therefore those who possess a good judgment and a clear mind, are always and everywhere the most tolerant, the most indulgent, the least sensitive, the most peaceful, the least exacting and the most easily contented. On the contrary, narrow minds, joined to poor judgment, have always their small brains worried about the

defects of others, and are like Abraham's ram entangled in the bush.

3. "As the elect of God, put on the bowels of mercy" (Col. 3.12). The bowels of mercy, the spirit of compassion for the miseries of others are the most excellent dispositions for practising the duties of charity. Put on the bowels of mercy, that spirit of charity and compassion for the neighbor, and show it by external acts; in other words, be affable, polite and obliging; show him a kind countenance, capable of drawing and winning him to you; show yourself ready to please him on every occasion; show yourself cheerful and full of a holy joy, so as to be able to console the afflicted and inspire confidence to the disheartened; affable, calm, benevolent in your looks, in order to dispel sensitiveness, prejudice, ill-humor, anger, antipathy, etc. Put on the bowels of mercy also interiorly, that is, truly love your neighbor, be moved by his ills and pains, and relieve them; esteem him; never think ill of him; excuse, hide, dissimulate his defects; never allow aversion, dislike, hatred, selfishness, jealousy and the like to enter your heart, which should bring forth only sentiments of compassion, indulgence and pity for his miseries. St. Paul calls the saints, "vessels of mercy" (Rom. 9. 23); and why? Because it is peculiar to all of them to spread mercy all around them, for their heart is a compound of kindness, charity, meekness, indulgence and brotherly love.

4. "*Be not overjust*" (Eccles. 7.17). Minds are like clothes, which should not be too tight for comfort. If we are so just as not to pardon anything to human weakness, and refuse to yield a little, we are unfit to live among men. He who is all severity for the shortcomings of his brethren and knows not how to forgive a fault that escapes them, or a defect of character, is, says St. Jerome, overjust. Oh, how many things do we not see and refrain from taking notice of them, and how many must we not silently bear! How many must we not touch lightly! When there is question of punishing him who has committed a fault, let us not be overjust and transgress the limits of a mild justice, which is compassionate towards the weak. Let us bear what we cannot correct. Certain bodily ailments are incurable, and certain bodily defects cannot be remedied. How can a cripple, a one-eyed man be cured? No matter what we may do, they will always remain the same. The same may be said of mental defects, which are, in some manner, incurable, and should, therefore, be borne with all possible meekness and tranquillity.

Be not overjust even in requiring good things, the task or duty each one is to perform; be satisfied with what each one can perform according to his talents and strength. Be satisfied with a good will. To require more than one can perform is to make him despond. Be not overjust, saying: "I will never allow any one to neglect his duty

towards me; he must have regard for my age, rank, etc. He who epilogues too much about his rights, becomes easily overjust, that is, sensitive, overexact. A good religious considers himself the last in the community, honors all, makes himself the servant of all, and expects nothing from others. They may forget him, or use him as a servant, he does not notice it, because he believes he has in all this only what he deserves.

5. *Be always united*, having the same sentiments, as far as possible. Why as far as possible? Because among the good, as among the saints, some minds do not agree among themselves, because they consider things under different aspects, and each one has his own light, and in indifferent things each one may follow his own views. Sts. Augustine and Jerome had different opinions on certain undecided questions, and wrote to each other very strong letters in defence of their respective views, without, however, wounding charity. The just may disagree about certain things, because they have different views, but they always agree in the will to find out what is right and good, and in tending to God, otherwise they would not be just. "It may happen," wrote St. Augustine to St. Jerome, "that you hold an opinion contrary to truth, but it behooves you to avoid doing anything contrary to charity in defending your opinion." And even when we are certain of being in the right, we must maintain truth with charity.

6. "Honor all men" (1 Pet. 2.17), and you shall preserve union which is so frail in itself. Esteem and respect all your brethren, because they are the servants of Jesus Christ, the temples of the Holy Ghost, the children of God, very noble and excellent creatures, chosen souls consecrated to the divine service and worship, predestined to a great perfection, to a great glory in heaven; they are souls, for the most part, adorned with virtues, whom God loves as the apple of His eye, and loads with numerous blessings. Honor and respect all your brethren, because they are members of your family, have the same vocation, share your table, your labors, your merits, are members of the same Institute, and because if you despise one of them, you despise and offend all the others. Honor and respect the elder brethren, because they are superior to you in age and virtue, in practical knowledge, in reason, experience and dignity, and because it is a duty for every one to respect everywhere grey hair and honor old age. Honor and respect the younger brethren, because they are innocent and candid; they are the wealth and hope of the Institute and expect from you a good example; you are charged with educating them; from you they must receive the right tone, good manners, the spirit of the religious family and of charity, which is a spirit of politeness and mutual respect. Honor and respect your equals, being mindful that rough manners, a low familiarity, the forgetfulness of propriety and of due

regard, beget contempt, kill friendship, produce quarrels, and bring forth discord. Honor and respect all your brethren, especially, the sick, the imperfect, the less talented, those who have the most defects physically and spiritually, being mindful that what is weak and suffering deserves consideration and encouragement, and that he who is sick and infirm in body and soul, is your member, a part of yourself. Do you despise your foot when it hurts you? Do you ridicule your hand when it is sore or soiled? Do you not, on the contrary, take greater care of them, and treat them more kindly and tenderly than the members that are sound? Honor and respect all your brethren, in order to preserve charity, because all have a claim on you to exercise charity towards them. All rational creatures, men and angels, and even God Himself, are so sensitive on this point, that Jesus Christ, who bore with a divine patience the insults of the Jews, complained of this, saying: "You have not honored Me," that is, given Me due honor. Honor and respect all your brethren, in order to keep up charity. In fact, the testimonies of honor and the marks of deference, that are sincere, foster mutual love and domestic peace, as oil keeps up the light of the lamp; hence without these, there is no family spirit, no mutual charity.

Honor and respect all your brethren, because you wish them to honor and respect you, for as you do unto others, so shall it be done unto you.

“Be not a debtor to any one,” says St. Peter, “but give to every one his due.” In what does this debt consist? It includes honor, respect, forestalling one another, kind deeds, testimonies of esteem and affection, help in need, and especially edification and good example. We must pay this debt daily, if we do not wish to die insolvent, and if we wish to be paid in return. Honor and respect all your brethren, so as to imitate God, who governs us, says the Holy Ghost (Wisd. 12.18), and leads the just by straight paths, imparting to them, with the science of the saints, a great esteem for their fellow-men (Wisd. 10.10,11). Honor and respect all your brethren, in order to imitate Jesus Christ, and be filled with His spirit. He compares Himself to the vine in blossom, spreading all around the good odor of humility and charity. His relations with men were accompanied with respect, as a perfume embalming all hearts. “When I utter the name of Jesus,” says St. Bernard, “I represent to myself a meek, modest, beneficent, obliging man, extremely remarkable for His readiness to oblige and His politeness.”

Let us, in fine, meditate on this saying of Jesus and make it the rule of our conduct: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” (Mat. 5.). “Those who in communities unite again together minds that were divided and restore peace,” says St. John Chrysostom, “perform the office of Jesus Christ, who came upon earth to reconcile men with God and

men among themselves, and to banish all dissensions. Because they labor for so excellent and divine an object, they deserve to be called the children of God. They are the pillars, the treasure of their communities. On the contrary, those who bring into them troubles and dissensions, are their scourge and pest, and should be punished and separated from the rest of the community.”

7. THE PROOF OR PRACTICE OF FRATERNAL CHARITY. (C)

We should never lose sight of the truth that God wishes to save men by contradictions, sufferings and the cross. Wherefore the beloved disciple says: "Jesus Christ came by water and blood" (1 John 5.6). Water signifies human nature, and blood, the sufferings which are to immolate it, and therefore God has left in us the consequences of original sin, to serve as trials and exercises of our virtue.

Faith teaches that all things work together unto good to the elect of God; our weaknesses, our miseries, our passions, evil inclinations and defects should serve us as steps to rise to God. "The vices do not ascend to heaven," says St. Augustine, "but raise us to Him, if we combat and tread upon them." The very malice of Satan, in God's designs, should contribute to exercise and perfect our virtue and bring us to heaven. When Duke Robert of Normandy arrived in Palestine to visit the holy places, he met four Saracens who were bent on killing and robbing him. Far from allowing them to do so, he looked at them so sternly as to fascinate them, frighten them by his prowess, and compelled them to carry him in a

palanquin to Jerusalem. On the way he met one of his friends, who asked him what news he wished him to bring to his country. He replied: "Tell every one that you saw the Duke of Normandy carried to heaven by four devils." This is an appropriate image of the strong soul conquering and throwing down her passions and overcoming her trials. She turns her greatest enemy, the devil, into the builder of her fortune and the pedestal of her glory.

There are four kinds of trials. 1. First, those that come directly from the devil, that is, his temptations enticing us to sin; 2, those that come from our fellow-men, or are the outcome of our relations with them; 3, those connected with our employment, and 4, those from our own selves, such as the shortcomings of our character and of our faculties, and our bodily ailments. Here we shall speak only of the second kind, those coming from our neighbor's defects, which it behooves us to bear with charity and patience, and the different characters to which we must adapt our own; the bodily infirmities of our brethren (and pupils), for which we should not show disgust, but which we ought to relieve as far as lies in our power; their bad examples which we should not follow or approve; their ingratitude which should never prevent us from continuing to do them good or to oblige them; the differences of views in matters that are free or doubtful; the spirit of contradiction, the lack of due regard towards us; the perse-

cutions or slanders of the wicked, of our opponents. God permits such trials:

1. First, to correct our own defects. Contradictions are to the good what a file is to the goldsmith and silversmith, what the chisel is to the sculptor to perfect and polish his statue, what the pruning-knife is to the gardener to prune and clean his plants. St. John of the Cross understood this well. "Consider," he said to his religious, "your brethren as so many sculptors holding the hammer and chisel of their own defects, in order to correct yours, and yourselves as a block of marble placed before them, in God's designs, to become a statue of Jesus Crucified, endowed with all His virtues." Our neighbor's defects serve to correct ours, like pebbles rolling together in a stream, and medals rubbing against one another in a bag, serve to polish one another. Plutarch was wont to say: "A man will never become truly virtuous and will never correct his defects, if he has not a sincere friend or a bitter enemy." A sincere friend admonishes us of our defects; but such a friend is rarely found, and his friendship for us may permit him to see only our virtues and render him indulgent for our defects; whilst an enemy, or a fellow-religious devoid of regularity and addicted to contradiction, perceiving our defects in their minutest details, will reproach us with them and unceasingly cast them up to us, and thus compel us to correct them. Such a manifestation, though very unpleasant, is

truly useful. "Therefore," says St. Alphonsus, "those religious ever ready to criticise others, although full of defects themselves, are really useful in communities, for they exercise their companions in patience, oblige them to watch over themselves and thus enable them to avoid many faults and correct their defects."

2. God permits the aforesaid trials to exercise our virtues, to develop and perfect them. It is a very common mistake, even among pious persons, to consider a person as possessing a virtue, if he does not commit sins opposed to it. There is a very great difference between a certain virtue, which is a habit of performing acts of that virtue, and the fact of not committing acts of its opposite vice. For instance, a person cannot be said to possess the virtue of purity because he does not commit impure acts; because he may never yet have been tempted to do so. Virtue, being a habit, is formed and acquired only by oft-repeated acts. A man may never get angry, because he does not meet with any provocation to anger; in this case he cannot be called a meek man, for he has given no proof of possessing the virtue of meekness; his meekness is all negative, and not positive. He alone possesses the virtue, the real positive virtue of meekness, who whenever provoked to anger, remains calm and undisturbed and keeps his feelings, his temper in check, under perfect control. To avoid the occasion of a sin, of a vice is a step toward the opposite virtue, but

not the virtue itself. It is no great wonder, if we are meek when there occurs nothing to provoke or irritate us. It would be strange, indeed, if when there is nothing to worry or excite us, we should be sour, peevish, and disagreeable towards those who are all kindness, love and condescension towards us! Bees sting only those who irritate them, but do no harm to those who do not. The cat's paw is soft to those who caress it, but causes those who ill-treat it to feel its sharp claws. Some persons seem to be meekness personified when everything pleases them; but if you dare to touch those calm mountains, you will find them to be raging volcanoes!

The touchstone, which discerns true from false or apparent meekness (or negative from positive meekness), is the patient bearing of injuries and contradictions. It is not difficult to be kind to those who are kind to us, but to do good to those who persecute us, to speak with moderation, kindness and affability to those who revile, outrage and slander us, is a sure proof that we possess in a high degree the virtue of charity, meekness and kindness. Let us never forget that a virtue is acquired by earnest efforts and repeated acts on our part, and that the strongest virtue is that which grows, like the lily, among the thorns of difficulties, trials and temptations. "It is no great matter," says St. Francis de Sales, "if a religious is meek and commits but few faults, where there is nothing to irritate or provoke him

to impatience. If some one says to me of a religious: 'That is a holy religious,' I ask at once: Has he any office in his community? If the answer is in the negative, I do not make much account of his holiness, for there is a great difference between his virtue and that of another religious which is well tried either interiorly by temptations, or exteriorly by the contradictions which he has to endure, because solid virtue is never acquired in time of peace, that is, when there are no contrary temptations to combat and overcome. Unfortunately many souls, who are weak and but little acquainted with the ways of God, do not understand this truth. They imagine that virtue consists in a peace and tranquillity exempt from trials and combats. This is very dangerous for them and liable to prove fatal to them." For it induces them to consider and treat as a hindrance to their perfection what is a necessary means to acquire it, and they, therefore, fail in charity by being scandalized by their neighbor's defects. "The life of the saints," says St. Augustine, "cannot be without contradictions and combats, for their spiritual progress is brought about by the trials which beset them." The elect advance in virtue through temptation. What the devil intends for their ruin, God turns into glory for them.

St. Leo asserts that virtue withers away when it has no adversary, and that great virtues cannot exist without great trials. "Charity towards our

neighbor, "says St. Jerome, "increases in power and merit in proportion to the number of its acts." "Therefore," says St. Fulgentius, "if for want of occasions, we do not practise it, we lose it." "You should believe," says St. Augustine, "that it is with good reason that there are imperfect souls and wicked men in the world. Every imperfect, or wicked man lives either to be converted or to try the good." Through men full of faults, through the wicked God forms and instructs His saints and prepares them for glory. The persecutions of the wicked, the defects of the imperfect are the file that takes off the rust from the saints, the chisel that polishes them, the pruning-knife that cuts off all that is defective in them. "Through the wicked," says Origen, "God develops and brightens the virtues of His elect." If the malice of the former were destroyed, the virtues of the latter would be neither so heroic nor so resplendent, nor so meritorious. Take away the malice, envy and perversity of the brothers of Joseph, and you deprive the holy patriarch of all the acts and merits of the virtues which their wickedness added to his crown.

"The world," says St. Basil, "is a battle-field, virtue combats on one side and crime on the other; on one side, pride and insolence, on the other, humility and modesty; on one side, anger, passion, insults and ill-treatment; on the other, patience and meekness; on one side, tyranny, license, injustice; on the other, indulgence, forbearance,

charity, taking revenge by forgiveness, by doing good, and returning good for evil." By these means the vices, defects and persecution of the wicked impart strong and persevering virtue to the good. "Wherefore," says St. Augustine, "God permits and tolerates the vices and defects of the wicked, in order to furnish the good with occasions to practise patience, mortification, constancy and to exercise every virtue." "No one," says Ven. Bede, "no one can become an Abel, if the malice of a Cain does not try his patience and virtue. Those who lack depth of understanding, judgment, and virtue, are astonished and sometimes even scandalized to find in religious communities so much misery, so many weak and imperfect souls. They imagine that convents contained only saints and souls exempt from all human weaknesses. This dangerous illusion induces them to judge severely the conduct of their brethren, to magnify their defects, to find in them defects which they have not, to regard as faults what is only a defectiveness in character, and makes them blind to their virtues. To cure this illusion, such religious should remember:

1. That according to St. Francis de Sales, convents are hospitals for the cure of spiritual diseases, and that, consequently, we find therein souls full of weaknesses and defects.

2. That those who possess solid virtue, count and carefully consider the virtues and good qualities of their brethren, and hardly notice their de-

fects. The wicked, and imperfect and weak souls count only the defects of their neighbor and take no notice of his virtues, wherefore their judgments of others are very unjust.

3. That, in the designs of Providence, our defects enter into the work of our perfection. Whence it follows that God, in His merciful thoughts, often leaves to very holy persons certain defects as an exercise for their virtue and a means of progress in perfection.

4. That the neighbor's defects serve to exercise in virtue all the members of the community and furnish them with a powerful means of sanctification. "Our spiritual life and death," says St. Pachomius, "depends, in some manner, on our neighbor," How can this be? If we win him over to God by our good example, if we patiently bear with his defects, if we practise charity towards him, we make great progress in virtue and save our own souls. If we do the contrary, we sin against Jesus Christ and endanger our salvation. "From our relations with our neighbor," says St. Francis de Sales, "proceeds half of the work of our sanctification, for, by bearing with one another, reciprocally forgiving one another, we exercise ourselves in all the virtues and become perfect in them." If our neighbor had no defects, no failings, what would we have to bear? Take his faults away from him, and tell me where would we find occasions for practising the most beautiful virtues? If your brethren were perfect, if we

lived with angels, where would be the virtues of patience, meekness, mortification, charity and all the beautiful virtues depending therefrom? We would find no opportunity to practise them. St. Bernard was so thoroughly convinced of this truth, that he does not hesitate to say to superiors: "If your community possesses none but holy religious, you must purchase one that has a disagreeable character, that is harsh, peevish, quarrelsome, burdensome, so as to afford both yourself and your brethren occasion of being exercised in meekness, patience, charity and all the social virtues." Our virtue is weak as long as it has not been tried by our neighbor's shortcomings. Unpleasant relations with others are the crucible in which charity, patience and meekness are tried, and by which we can discover in what degree we possess them.

But we need not purchase with gold a defective and irregular subject, for we are thorns to one another. As there is no rose without thorns, so there is no religious without defects. The most holy is not he who has none at all, nor sometimes he who has the least, but he who most closely watches himself and combats them the best. We all have defects and we reciprocally furnish one another many occasions of practising virtue. "The most united and fervent communities," says Ven. Father Libermann, "have never been able to keep wholly away from the painful contact of men; if two angels were to live together as two human

beings, twenty-four hours would not pass without some cloud coming in between them." "However great the care in choosing subjects," judiciously remarks St. Frances de Chantal, "God, in order to try the others, always permits that there should be some ill-disposed members in every community." Far from complaining of such a disposition of divine Providence, we should thank God for it, because it affords us the opportunity of practising the most beautiful virtues. "Our neighbor," says Ven. Father Champagnat, "helps us in three ways to go to God: 1, in the first place, he induces us to go to God through the good odor of his virtues and good example; 2, by his defects which it behooves us to bear, conceal and excuse; this obliges us often to practise patience, meekness, charity and many other virtues: and 3, by the occasions he affords us of exercising zeal in his regard, by admonishing and reproving him and helping him to amend."

It is, therefore, easy to understand how mistaken are the superiors who consider it a misfortune to have subjects who, because of their shortcomings, need to be corrected and trained, and, therefore, ask to have them changed. By acting thus they deprive themselves of many occasions of practising virtue, of a powerful means of sanctification, and fail in charity towards those whose change they solicit. It usually profits no one to change easily the subjects who have defects, whose conduct or character is defective. A good

superior does not easily ask for such changes. It is contrary to charity to turn over to another superior a subject we complain of; moreover, we seldom can find men without defects which we cannot bear. In such changes one religious is often replaced by another who is not an improvement. Therefore, it is more simple, more reasonable and more charitable to endeavor to train and improve one's subjects. When a coachman frequently asks to change his team, he is at last suspected of not knowing his business.

Father Balthasar Alvarez, who admirably understood all the merit there is in bearing with and training subjects, besought his Provincials to send to his community all their untractable and disagreeable subjects, that he might win them by his prudence and meekness, and thus procure for himself occasions of practising virtue. Other superiors do usually just the contrary; but, alas! those spiritually diseased subjects, being moved from house to house, and ever changing physicians and treatment, become more and more spiritually emaciated, and may end by losing their vocation. St. Vincent de Paul wrote as follows to a superior who had complained of one of his subjects and had requested that he should be sent elsewhere: "Bear meekly with this dear fellow-religious; you have perhaps not the defects you lay to his charge, but you have others which he is obliged to bear. If you did not have him, you would not have anything to suffer; your charity would have no oc-

casion, to be exercised or developed, and your life would have no resemblance to that of Jesus Christ, who chose rude and uncouth disciples subject to many defects. Do you know why our Savior acted thus? That He might be the model of superiors and teach them that, in bearing the defects of their subjects, they acquire great merits, perfect themselves in virtue, please God and win souls to Him."

3. Finally, the trials that come from our relations with our neighbor help us to correct our defects and afford us the necessary occasions of becoming trained in solid virtue, *increase our merits* and prepare for us great glory in heaven. St. Bonaventure says therefore: "It is very useful for the good on earth to be mingled with those who are imperfect and full of defects, because the latter furnish with frequent opportunities of gaining great merit and great reward those who endeavor to correct them and train them in virtue, who watch so as not to imitate or wound them, who are often tried in a wholesome way by the persecutions they undergo from them, and who humble themselves and acknowledge that they owe it to God only that they themselves do not fall into similar faults." It is evident that if the good religious had not the opportunities of performing all these acts of virtue, they would have fewer merits, their virtue would be less solid, less conspicuous, less perfect and their reward less great."

St. Jerome so highly esteemed forbearance with the neighbor's defects, as to prefer it to the merit of the contemplative life. A very virtuous person, belonging to a noble Roman family, had written to request him to admit her into the convent he had founded at Bethlehem, alleging that her mother, although very pious, was a great obstacle to her perfection for, by her disagreeable character, she exposed her to commit many faults. St. Jerome replied: "If your mother is such as you describe her, remain with her, for by your forbearance and patience towards her, you shall be better trained in meekness, charity, obedience, mortification, self-denial, and will gather more merit than in the novitiate."

Such occasions of practising virtue and becoming pleasing to God are more highly esteemed than a treasure by the souls who earnestly strive to make progress in virtue. Penetrated with this truth St. Dorothy considered forbearance with our neighbor and the virtues connected therewith as a mark of predestination. "Man," he says, "knows not whether he is deserving of love or of hatred, for this is God's secret. Nevertheless, we can almost be sure of being deserving of love, if we really love our brethren, that is, if we help them in their wants, bear their defects with patience and assist them to correct them, for he who thus loves his neighbor, loves God; and he who truly loves God is in the state of grace and is deserving of love, and wears the seal of the elect on

his brow." Let us, then, briefly repeat what we have said above, for we can never be too deeply persuaded of this truth: Our defects, in the designs of God, enter into the work of our sanctification; our neighbor's defects are a benefit for us, for they afford us occasions of practising virtue. We should, then, thank God for having left these defects in them, and earnestly make a good use of these means of perfection by being full of charity and indulgence towards our neighbor and bearing with him in all patience.

8. THE LIFE OF A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY. (C)

At the close of the Visitation of one of the houses of his Institute Ven. Father Champagnat said to the Bro. Director: "I am not satisfied with your house." "What have you found wrong in it?" "Your house lacks the religious life, the family life,—happiness cannot be found in it; the virtue of your subjects cannot maintain itself." Later on, he sent a Brother to instil the family spirit into that community. Speaking to them on this subject, he said: "To be happy and sanctify oneself in a community, the family life must reign in it. The family life is to be found in these two points: paternal sentiments in the superior, and a childlike spirit among the subjects.

I. God Himself gave us the first lesson of the family life in these words: "Let Us make man after our image and likeness." The eternal Father did not say, "I make," or "make," but "let Us make," let Us unite to create man; let each of Us contribute His share to this work, and co-operate with the Others in perfect union. This actually took place. The Father brought authority and power, the Son, understanding, and the Holy Ghost, love. The creation of man, there-

fore, is the fruit of union, a family work. We may say the same of the Redemption. The Father so loved mankind as to give His Son to save them; the Son, imitating His Father, so loved men as to give His own life to redeem them; and the Holy Ghost co-operated in this mystery, for the mystery of the Incarnation took place by His operation, and He descended on the apostles to complete the work of the Redemption, to sanctify men, and to apply to them the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ. We are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, because the three Divine Persons united to raise and rehabilitate us, to save and elevate us to the supernatural order and the divine adoption.

This union is the image of that which should reign in all religious houses. To carry out the special object of an Institute, one member of the community is not sufficient; all the members must concur therein. There is one to direct; another devotes his talents, a third, his love; others their strength, their labor, their docility, their devotedness. From this union and concourse there results a strong authority, an influence, an irresistible impulse for doing good, a unity and combination of efforts and action, well calculated to produce success in attaining an object, and, at the same time, to maintain discipline, and bring forth prosperity, peace and happiness to the members and make such a house an earthly paradise.

Jesus Christ gave us the second lesson of the family life. He lived, prayed and labored with His apostles, treated them as His children, brethren, friends and as a second self. Moreover, He became their Master, servant, teacher, instructing and serving them in all patience. "I am in your midst as one that serveth." Such, indeed, is the family life, the sentiments of a good father who loves his children, devotes himself to their interests and lives only for them. Thus act also all good superiors. St. Paul, a perfect imitator of Jesus Christ, led this family life with his disciples and the early Christians. He was wont to consider himself as a loving mother among her children, saying: "My little children, I am wholly devoted to you; out of love I raise you, instruct you and beget you to Jesus Christ. In this ministry of spiritual paternity I seek not my own interests, but the salvation of your souls; I make myself all to all, in order to benefit you; I put on every form to please you; and I seek to please you, in order to win you to Jesus Christ." What an admirable model of the family life and of the sentiments that ought to animate every superior!

Filled with the same spirit St. Peter gives this lesson of the family life to all pastors of souls and superiors: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it, not by constraint, but willingly, according to God; not for filthy lucre's sake, but voluntarily; neither as lording it over the clergy, but being made a pattern of the flock from

the heart'' (1 Peter. 5. 2, 3). All holy superiors exert themselves to imitate these examples. St. Vincent de Paul lived with his subjects as the best of fathers with his children. He bestowed so much attention on each one, that there was not one who had any reason to doubt of the saint's most tender love for him personally. Ever polite, benevolent and ready to provide for their wants, ever disposed to listen to them; he never spoke ill of the absent, never corrected or reproved any one without having previously given him a friendly admonition and listened to what he had to say in his defense.

St. Macarius was ingenious in trying to please his brethren. Whilst exerting himself to cause them to advance in virtue, his great preoccupation was to make them happy and contented, and to enable them to find the yoke of Christ sweet and light, and to taste, by a fervent life, the hundred-fold of the consolations promised by the Saviour to all who are faithful in His service. St. Bernard's great maxim was that the superior should not command as a master, but should govern as a father. In his exhortations to his religious he was fond of comparing himself to a mother; he would call them his eyes, his heart; he commanded and exacted nothing, without first giving the example himself. By such a conduct he won the hearts of all, and they loved him as a father, and obeyed him with a holy joy.

St. Honoratus was a rare model of the paternal

sentiments that should animate every superior, and of the family life which promotes the happiness of the whole community. The joys and the sorrows of each of his subjects were all his; he made his own their gains and their losses, their progress and their virtue, and even their very faults. He rejoiced with the joyful, wept with the sad and the afflicted. He was diligent, active, indefatigable in helping, consoling and encouraging; he would admonish one in secret, another in public; one with severity, another with great kindness; if he gave commands, and, in some cases, urged on his subjects, it was always with due regard, cordiality, affability and politely. He was ever watchful lest a certain one should be overburdened with work, and another be subjected to temptations for want of occupation; he knew so well how to foresee what would prove advantageous or hurtful to each one, according to his character, that he seemed to bear each one in his heart. In fine, all his thoughts and cares tended to make all his subjects happy, and to cultivate each one's soul as his own.

From all this it is easy to understand that a superior, in order to establish and maintain the family spirit in his community, should act as a father towards his brethren and love them all in Jesus Christ with a tender charity. He should give them a good example, be always the first at the community exercises, be fond of their company, live and work like them, recreate himself

with them, and be not distinguished from them except by a greater fidelity to the Rule. A good father lives only for his children, and the perfect superior only for his subjects. He is ingenious in winning their esteem, in pleasing them, in making their life happy, piety sweet and virtue amiable to them. He is solicitous for their success in their employment, endeavors to facilitate their tasks, to train the juniors and enable them to acquire all the knowledge and ability necessary in their state, and he provides for their wants. He watches carefully that nothing may occur to wound mutual respect, fraternal charity, politeness, in a word, that nothing may disturb the cordiality, concord and union of the family life.

II. A childlike spirit is the second part of the family life; it pertains to the subjects. It consists in the love of a child for his loving father; in a religious respect and profound veneration for his authority and for all that proceeds from him; in an entire confidence which enables him to consider and accept all his dispositions as the most suitable and becoming; in a perfect docility to his orders and directions, and in an entire devotedness to all that he wills and to all that may please him. These sentiments are testified by kind attentions, becoming regard and constant compliance; by meek, polite, reverential language and all the respect due to a superior; by an unremitting and obsequious attention to please him, to relieve him, and render him every possible serv-

ice; by union and conformity of views and sentiments, performing everything, not only according to his orders, but even according to his wishes, if they are known.

The principle that produces, vivifies, preserves and develops these sentiments, is the faith which teaches us that the superior holds God's place, represents Jesus Christ and that, therefore, it is God that speaks and commands through him, and that it is Jesus Christ whom we then obey or disobey, according to His saying: "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me."

Wherefore, the family life requires, first, the superior to be wholly devoted to his subjects, to live for them only, to devote his time and talents in training, instructing and directing them; to watch with solicitude over their temporal and spiritual welfare; and to consider it his duty to win their confidence, to be pleasing to them and make them contented and happy.

In the second place, the family life requires that the subjects be wholly devoted to their superior and most carefully avoid whatever is reasonably displeasing to him or what may grieve or pain him; that they should endeavor to lighten the burden of his office and sweeten its crosses, and make his life happy, as far as may be in their power.

The family life is the community of good and evil things. Not only should the temporal goods be in common, but also those of the mind, that is,

each one's talents should tend to benefit all; also the corporal goods, as health and strength, and the goods of the soul, the virtues: all these should be made to benefit the whole community. It behooves each one to give good example to all the other members and to pray for all.

The family spirit goes still further, for it renders the goods granted to the individual members the property of all. A religious should be content, joyful and happy on account of the gifts, virtues, talents and every good he beholds in his brethren, and bless and thank God for them, and share the honor, glory and satisfaction resulting therefrom, just as a mother rejoices and glories in the honors, etc., bestowed on her son and in the good accomplished by him. In like manner, the troubles, sufferings, afflictions and adversities of the community and of each of its members should also be considered as affecting each one personally; and each one should strive to relieve or console those who suffer, to assist those who are in need, to help the overburdened, to bear his full share in all the evils affecting the community or any of its members.

There are four things which disturb and ruin the family life.

1. First the sick or irregular members. Each member of the body has its own place in it. The member that would go out of its place or refuse to fulfil its respective function, would disturb the harmony of the whole and fatigue or overload

the other members. The feet are made to carry the body and the eyes to guide it; were the eyes to undertake to carry the body and the feet to guide it, there would be only trouble and confusion. In like manner, a religious who does not stay in his place, usurps that of the superior, and undertakes to order around and command the others, is an irregular religious who grievously transgresses his duty, scandalizes his brethren and disturbs the family life. The superior who does not respect the rights and position of his subjects, who hinders their correspondence with the higher superiors, who does not let the officials perform the duties of their office, who appropriates everything to himself, who wishes to do everything himself, is a sick and irregular head, and instead of beneficially influencing his subjects, only ill-treats and worries them, and paralyzes their labors. Every paralyzed or infirm member is burdensome to the others and causes them to suffer. Every religious who neglects his employment or performs it carelessly, or follows therein his own whims and notions, and pays no attention to what obedience requires, disturbs and ruins the family life, causes his brethren to suffer, overburdens them, injures the common good and the prosperity of the community.

2. The selfish member. The law of nature requires that all the members of the human body should labor for the common good. Therefore the eyes see for the benefit of the whole body, the

stomach digests for all the members, the heart distributes the blood and causes it to circulate and bring life through the arteries and veins all over the body; the hands work for and serve all the parts of the body. The member that would disobey its law and care only for itself, would bring disorder into the whole body; and that is just what the selfish religious does, for he sees only himself, thinks only of his own private interests and works only for himself. In all things he seeks only his comfort, all that can gratify his tastes, his wants and even his passions. Devoid of charity and of those feelings of compassion, indulgence and kindness, that form the character of beautiful souls, the selfish religious is hard-hearted and has bowels of iron; he has no feeling for the pains of his brethren, does not notice their wants, does nothing to relieve them, and does not even give them a thought. Selfishness is the enemy of the spirit of charity and the death of the family life.

The good religious imitates the members of the body; he labors for the common good and always prefers the interests of the community to his personal gratification; being wholly devoted to his brethren, he thinks only of how he may be useful to them, how he may forestall and satisfy their wants, and he sacrifices himself to procure their pleasure and happiness. Always forgetful of self, he always prefers his brethren, his neighbor to himself, takes upon himself the hardest tasks,

whatever is least comfortable for his body, and leaves to others the best and the easiest.

Bro. Paschal was a model in this. One day one of his pupils brought him a bottle of cordial and a package of chocolates. As Bro. Paschal was trying to induce the boy to give those articles to the Bro. Director, or to the Brother in charge of the temporals of the house, one of his fellow-religious said to him: "Keep those things for yourself and use them when you need them." "What a strange advice you give me!" replied Bro. Paschal with some warmth; "I should accept a personal gift! and break my vow! Never, never! And do you look upon me as selfish? You are mistaken; when I have something good, I want my brethren to share it with me, and I intend also to have a good share in all that is to be had in this house, for I believe that equality and fraternal charity constitute the happiness of the community life." And he was right. Later on, when he was Director of the house at Digoin, a relative, knowing his weak health, gave him some delicacies, under the condition that they should be for himself only. He replied: "A gift under such a condition is not a gift, but an insult. Make all the conditions you wish, I will, nevertheless have the pleasure of regaling my brethren with what you give me, and this pleasure will be so sweet, that it will benefit me a hundred times more than if I enjoyed it all alone."

Bro. John Peter Martinol, Director of the com-

munity at Boulieu, visited the motherhouse at Lavalla in 1824. To return to Boulieu he had to leave Lavalla at a very early hour before the community had risen. Ven. Father Champagnat said to him: "As the cook is not yet up, here is a cake that was given to me last Sunday; take it along and eat it on the way home as your breakfast." "No, Father," he replied; "I will bring it home to the Brothers and we shall all eat it together with great pleasure, for all that comes from you or the motherhouse, is sweet and pleasant to us, and does us so much good. I am glad to be able to give the Brothers this pleasure; and I know that we shall all feel very happy and shall speak at dinner about you and the Lavalla Brothers." Charmed by such sentiments, Father Champagnat exclaimed: "My dear Brother, you make me weep for joy by saying this; for such are the real sentiments of the family spirit which ought to animate all our brethren. Let us carefully preserve these sentiments and this spirit and we shall enjoy in its fulness the happiness of the religious life."

3. The member who is discontented, or who has a bad spirit. What is a bad spirit? It is blindness of the soul, an unfavorable prejudice begotten by pride, which causes us to see things otherwise than they are, and therefore leads us to judge them falsely. It is a fund of peevishness which imparts a cunning and inconstant character, an inclination to censure, to murmur, to judge rashly and to speak ill of others. It is a secret aversion

to authority and to all that proceeds from it, an opposition to depend thereon, a readiness to blame superiors and to censure all they say, do and command, and to withdraw from their direction. It is a license to say all that we wish, a secret satisfaction to lower and injure the superior, to domineer over others, to induce them to criticise, murmur and to be insubordinate.

Nothing is more opposed and contrary to the family life than a bad spirit, for, says St. Bernard, "it is a poison that corrupts all the social virtues which constitute the family spirit; it is a poison that comes from hell, of which the devil is the father and the model, for he gave the example of it from the beginning, by carrying on war and bringing cockle into heaven. The religious who is subject to this deplorable defect, does in his community, what Lucifer did in heaven, and the serpent in the earthly paradise; that is, he brings into it disturbance, confusion, unhappiness by ruining its family spirit."

This detestable vice kills all religious virtues. The religious life is a life of obedience; he who has a bad spirit is given up to his own will and cannot bear to be dependent on any one. The religious life is an humble and modest life; the bad spirit, being a child of pride, of self-will, of the devil, loves only vanity, human glory and praise and seeks to be everywhere conspicuous and to domineer over all. The religious life is a life of charity, peace, union and mutual forbear-

ance; the bad spirit is essentially selfish, divides men from one another, breaks up union and spreads dissension and discord among all. The religious life in the subjects is a filial love for and an affectionate devotedness to the superior. The bad spirit is the *I* personified set up in the place of authority; it is the *I* criticising and blaming all that proceeds from lawful authority. If the superior is zealous for the regular observance, the bad spirit stigmatizes him as a tyrant; if he dissimulates and tries to bring the culprit back to duty by kind treatment, the bad spirit charges him with cowardice, with allowing disorders to prevail and ruin the religious discipline. If the superior is economical, he is called a miser, a man devoid of charity; if he is generous, he is accused of squandering. The accursed *I* adores himself and finds nothing good except what he himself conceives and does.

The religious life is a life of the family, of fraternal charity. The bad spirit comprises all the defects contrary to the social virtues. He is excessively punctilious, sensitive, touchy and delicate; he takes offense at everything; a word, a gesture, a look, an indifferent act devoid of evil intent scandalizes him, wounds and irritates him and makes him taciturn and ill-humored for days. Is there anything more liable to kill the family life than he who combines such defects in himself? Such a religious is a torment, a heavy cross for his superiors, a bush of sharp thorns for his

brethren, the scourge of his community and the executioner of its family life. "What can be expected of a religious who has a bad spirit?" asks St. John Climacus; "nothing good, a miserable end, for he is a rotten member, threatening to inoculate the other members with his gangrene; he is a member that should be amputated and thrown back into the world, if we wish to prevent him from communicating his poison to the whole body, for with him the family life is impossible.

4. The Brother servant, the member who remains as a stranger in the community. "To be happy in the community," Father Champagnat would often say, "a man must not enter it as a servant, or a stranger, but as a son, a child of the house. God Himself tells us that man shall leave father and mother, in order to cleave to his wife. In like manner, the religious who wishes to be happy in his state, to enjoy in it the consolations of the religious and the family life, must leave his parents and relatives and all that he possesses in the world, in order to attach himself to his superiors, to his brethren and to the Institute, which is henceforth to be his family. He who does not wholly give himself to his community, who does not strive to be animated with the sentiments of a dutiful child of his Institute, is not a religious, but only a stranger in the family bringing into it only vitiated and disturbing elements. Such a one has not a childlike spirit; he considers the superior as a master, as an importunate superin-

tendent. He has no real affection for his brethren, whom he considers only as strangers or only acquaintances; to whom he shows but little attention and kindness, without seeking to oblige them. Wholly occupied with his own self, his own interests, he cares little whether his fellow-religious suffer or are overburdened. He performs his tasks only to get done with them, for he is indifferent to the interests of the community, caring not whether it prospers or meets with reverses. There is scarcely any one more miserable than the religious devoid of the family spirit, that is, than he who is not devoted to his Institute, who centers his affections in his family and worldly friends, and lives in his own community as a stranger, as having his goods and his treasures elsewhere. What is still more deplorable is that he brings unhappiness to all around him, disturbs their happiness, weakens the family spirit among them, compromises the works of his vocation, is an obstruction to all who live with him, and a cause of ruin for the Institute.

A venerable pastor, when bidding good-bye to the Brothers going to the Mother-house for their annual retreat, said to their Director: "Come back soon, and bring four Brothers along." "There is no danger of our number being diminished, for there will be five of us, when we return." The pastor made no reply; but when the Brothers returned, he explained his meaning. Seeing the five Brothers before him, he said: "Last year

there were only three Brothers, for two of them did not count, because they had not the right spirit, they did not lead a family life. When I went to your house, I seldom found them with the others; I never saw them do their share of work in the house or in the garden. They had their own method of teaching. From their ways it was easy to see that they were only schoolmasters and not Brothers, and that their heart was not in the education and the training of the children. Though numbered among the community, they were not members of it; they were worth less than nothing for doing good, for they paralyzed the efforts and zeal of their brethren. I expect better things from the new comers. I am wholly devoted to your Institute; but I must say that I like only the true Brothers, for experience shows me that only these edify my parish and benefit the children." The good pastor was right and had well judged the two Brothers, who were devoid of virtue and of the religious spirit, and had a disagreeable character which unfitted them for the religious life.

A certain Brother complained to his confessor, a holy religious, that his profession had been postponed, and asked his advice thereon. "As far as your conscience is concerned," he replied, "I see nothing that should keep you from making your vows; but your dispositions, as known to me as your confessor, do not warrant my saying to you

that you can, in all security, take such an engagement upon yourself. There is one point that should be known in reference to this: and that is whether you possess the spirit and the qualities of your state. Do you love your Institute? Do you love your brethren? Have you a childlike spirit, the family spirit? Is your character suited to the community life? Your superior alone can properly decide whether you sufficiently possess all these requisites, because he alone has watched over you and knows your exterior conduct. The religious life is not a benefit for him who lacks these qualities. Such a one suffers in religion and gains but little merit; and, what is more deplorable, he causes every one else to suffer, because he breaks up the family spirit." This was a beautiful answer, which candidates for profession should seriously consider, as also those who are to vote concerning their admission.

The general rules of religious Institutes forbid the admission of seculars to the common recreation of the religious; why? Because every one who does not form a part of the body, every stranger disturbs and weakens the family spirit. The religious are not at their ease in the presence of seculars; they keep a reserve unbefitting the unrestrained and easy ways of a family. Seculars in a religious community are like a wooden leg in a human body. Were that leg even magnificently carved and gilt, that is, were that secu-

lar an excellent Catholic, or even a clergyman, he is always like a wooden leg which cannot perfectly harmonize with the rest, which deforms the body, embarrasses its motions, disturbs the common liberty and life. The family life excludes and does not tolerate the wooden leg. This is a point of great importance. Moreover, every religious who attracts his relatives to the place in which he resides, and keeps them as long as he can, shows that the religious family life is weak in him, and that his heart and affections are not for his religious family, and that his community cannot fully rely on him. Every stranger, whoever he may be, disturbs the family happiness, and superiors and subjects should keep all seculars out of the community.

Finally, the happiness of the community life depends on all the members. Each one is bound to contribute his share, and each one enjoys this happiness in proportion to his efforts and sacrifices in procuring it for the others. If you impart contentment in your house, you shall enjoy it. Nothing is more just, for the others will give you what you give them, and will treat you as you treat them. "Do unto others, what you wish them to do unto you." The same measure you give to others, shall be given to you. You shall reap what you have sown. If you sow peace, contentment and happiness among your brethren, they also will give you peace, contentment and happiness. If you cast trouble among them, you shall

reap trouble also; if you sow the wind, you shall reap the whirlwind, a fierce storm. The law of retaliation requires that you be treated as you treat others.

9. VIRTUES OF THE FAMILY LIFE. (C)

Which are the advantages of the community life? Replying to this question, St. Basil, among other things, says that such a life is preferable to the solitary or contemplative life, because it enables us more perfectly to practise charity, the first and greatest of all virtues. In fact, the true family life is charity in practice, charity exercised habitually with all its qualities. St. Paul admirably understood this truth and thus taught it to the early Christians: "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own; is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13. 4-7). These words of the apostle show us that charity comprises all the social virtues, all the rules of the family life, all the sentiments that should animate superiors and subjects and, consequently, all that can secure the happiness of both, as we shall now see.

1. Charity is patient. He who possesses this virtue suffers without complaint all kinds of wrongs, contempt, sarcasm, insults, want of due

regard and all ill-treatment from his brethren. With St. Ambrose he says: "When someone loads me with reproaches and insults, tries to provoke me to anger, and to dispute, I keep silent, and I am not ashamed to become dumb, for he who thus acts towards me does wrong, and I do not wish to resemble him." The patient teacher never punishes a pupil, when he is in bad humor, or excited, and thus he avoids using bitter, harsh and offensive language that would wound charity and even ordinary politeness. He accepts without complaints the trouble connected with his employment, bears the contradictions of the world, the ignorance, coarseness, ingratitude and all the other defects of the children, and suffers patiently in union with Jesus Christ all that is painful and difficult in this ministry of charity. He is never disheartened, notwithstanding his little success in teaching, never grows weary in often repeating the same things, in giving the same counsels, the same corrections, although the result may hardly be apparent, bearing in mind that it behooves him to cultivate, pull out, plant, water, preserve, but that "God giveth the increase." He never returns evil for evil, but, as St. Paul enjoins, he blesses those who curse him, prays for those who persecute him, presents his left cheek to him who struck him on the right and numbers among his friends those who censure and slander him. Thus acted St. Stephen, the abbot, who thanked those that had caused him much suffer-

ing and included in his *memento* those who outraged and persecuted him. St. Francis de Sales, threatened, insulted and called a hypocrite by a brutal man, after bearing a long time with him with admirable patience, replied: "Know well that were you to put out one of my eyes, I will still look kindly at you with the other, as if you were my very best friend." The saints, being desirous of becoming pleasing to God, sought occasions of practising charity by patiently bearing with the shortcomings of their neighbor. St. Philip Neri was ill-treated by the religious among whom he was living; instead of showing displeasure or complaining about them to their superior, he treated them with respect and did them all the favors in his power. And as some of his friends insisted that he should leave that place, he replied: "I will not do so, for I do not wish to shun the crosses which God sends me." Nevertheless when he perceived that he could not win those bad religious by his charity and humility, and that all his kindness rendered them still more intractable, he had recourse to Jesus Christ. Raising his eyes to a crucifix, he exclaimed: "O my Jesus, why dost Thou not listen to me? I have already so long and so earnestly besought Thee for charity and patience; why hast Thou not heard me?" "I will give thee these beautiful virtues," replied Jesus; "but I wish thee to acquire them by this means." The place where he found the opportunity of practising patience and charity, became

most delightful to him, for he remained there thirty years, and left it only by order of the Pope.

A Bro. Director once said to the Superior General: "I regret the young Brother you have taken from me, not because he performed his charge well, for he did it very poorly, but because he was very useful to me by exercising me in patience and meekness." Beautiful words and a sublime sentiment, which indicated a chosen soul who possessed the science of the saints, and was faithful to grace and profited by the occasions of making progress in virtue!

2. Charity is meek. According to St. Thomas the virtue of meekness indicates a noble soul; he who is meek, in fact, is superior to all that may be said or done to him. When he is outraged by words or deeds, he remains calm and does not lose his peace. According to St. Francis de Sales, nothing edifies the neighbor so much as kindness and meekness. Affability and meekness, according to St. Vincent de Paul, admirably conduce to keep up peace, concord and union of hearts. "The older I grow," said St. Frances de Chantal, "the more I see that meekness is the virtue that rules men and renders their mutual relations easy and pleasant." Meekness, like sugar, is the sweetener of conversation and the food of concord. All men love this virtue. Hence we are not astonished to read in the Life of St. Francis Xavier that many visited him merely to witness his admirable meekness and his kind and gentle character.

The religious who wishes to make progress in this virtue and lead a truly family life, should act as follows: Following the counsel of St. Francis de Sales, he considers his neighbor as being in the breast (heart) of Jesus, and is ever mindful of the Saviour's words: "Whatsoever you do to the least of My brethren, you do it unto Me." If he is thoroughly penetrated with this principle of faith, how can he keep from loving his neighbor? How can he refrain from treating him with meekness and kindness? Being convinced that disputes, quarrels, harsh language, intolerance of the opinions of others, are the scourges of conversation, he follows this ancient pagan saying: "In conversation be respectful and deferential towards your superiors, meek and kind towards your equals, and benevolent towards your inferiors." He endeavors especially to practise meekness in his words, actions and in all his relations with his neighbor. He is pleased with and puts into practice this saying of St. Francis de Sales: "The tongue must keep still as long as the mind is irritated or excited." When speaking with one who is provoked or in ill-humor, he recalls this saying of the Holy Ghost: "A mild answer breaketh wrath." He then either remains silent, or replies only with the greatest meekness. When St. John the Abbot was insulted by one of his religious, he gave him no answer. "Why do you not impose silence on that wicked Brother?" some one asked him. "When a house is on fire," he re-

plied, "it is not the proper time to put more wood into it. Meekness and silence are more apt to calm the Brother than correction." The meek religious follows these maxims of St. Francis de Sales: "We can catch more flies with a tea-spoonful of honey than with a hundred barrels of vinegar.—A sauce is never spoiled with too much sugar, but often with too much salt or vinegar." A good religious, in his relations with his brethren (or pupils), always employs meekness, insinuation, persuasion, and carefully avoids constraint, rigidity, and whatever may hurt their feelings.

3. "Charity is benevolent." "Charity," says St. John, "is manifested by works." Every other proof is equivocal. Some say: "I love my neighbor, and to prove it, I show him a cheerful countenance, and I am all politeness towards him." "That is all very well," remarks St. Bernard; "but that is only the very lowest degree of charity." "I do more," says another, "for my brethren are so dear to me, that I consider it my duty to oblige them whenever there is occasion for so doing." "The second degree, though better, is not sufficient." A third says: "I love my brethren so much that I devote all I have to relieve their wants." "This," says St. Bernard, "is a very high and excellent degree of charity, but it is not the most perfect." The fourth degree consists in being able to say with St. Paul: "Be ye my imitators, as I am of Christ;" that is, as Jesus Christ gave us His labors, strength, blood, merits and life

and wholly sacrificed Himself for men's welfare and salvation, so also am I ready to devote my labors, strength, health and life for my brethren. The only true charity is benevolent and beneficent, for it gives all and reserves nothing.

4. "Charity envieth not." The religious who is truly charitable, considers the welfare of his brethren as his own, and knows not *mine* and *thine*. With Ven. Father Champagnat he says: "Speak not to me of *yours* and *mine*, for all I have is yours, and what is yours is mine also, because our interests are identical." Wherefore, he rejoices at their success, thanks God for what they do, and is sorry for their failures, as if they were his own. He sees, not only without regret, but even with pleasure that they surpass him in talents, that they are more highly esteemed and honored than he, are preferred to him, and rejoices at seeing them raised to higher offices, whilst he remains in the lowest and most burdensome employments. With Jonathas he says: "Thou shalt command, and I shall be after thee and obey thee." Charity in heaven is so great, that each elect rejoices as much in the glory of the others as in his own. In like manner, the good religious feels happy and rich because of the gifts, talents and advantages of his brethren, and enjoys them as if they were his own. A holy religious, beholding himself the object of another's envy, resolved to care for him and make himself the servant, and would make his bed, clean his shoes, dust his clothes, sweep his room and

render him every kind of service. By this humble and charitable conduct he cured him of his envy, gained his confidence and affection and became his best friend.

5. "Charity is not ambitious." A true religious does not desire the first places, nor office or honor. If he is appointed to office, he considers himself doubly obliged to practise humility, according to this saying of the Holy Ghost: "The more thou art elevated, the more thou shouldst make thyself little." His whole ambition is to remain hidden and to live in submission to others. He finds no difficulty, but pleasure and joy in laying down an honorable office or employment. He willingly devotes himself to manual labor, and has a particular attraction for the lowest and meanest tasks. He seeks not to domineer over his brethren, but to be the servant of all. If obedience requires him to be over them, he causes them to feel his authority only by his good example and benefits; he rules over them only as a loving mother rules over her children, or as a Sister of Charity or of Mercy rules over her patients, that is, through charity, devotedness and solicitude.

Pope Sixtus V., who had been a monk in the convent of the Holy Apostles in Rome, informed the members of that community, that he intended to grant to each of them a special favor, and that all should first reflect well on what favor they desired. The monks were overjoyed and went in a body to see the Pope. He had a secretary at his side to

write down the request of each monk. Each one came in his turn to the Holy Father to make his request known. The majority of the requests do not deserve to be mentioned, for they were far from edifying; we give only three of them for they relate to our present subject and may serve us as a good lesson.

One Brother asked for a "Brief" forbidding all his brethren, under pain of excommunication, ever to dispute with him, or ever to say anything unpleasant to him. He was right, says the historian, in asking for this safeguard, for he was of an insolent, proud and disagreeable character, who frequently afforded his brethren the opportunity of practising patience. Their kindly ways could not move him or make him reasonable, for, in order to keep him in his place and avoid his ill-treatment, they felt obliged to retaliate. Hence when he made his request, some one said in a whisper: "The 'Brief' he needs is a dungeon, or an executioner."

Another Brother requested that his family, one of the noblest in Naples, should be allied by marriage to the Perretti family, that of the Pope. "I will grant you this," replied the Pope; "but as there should be some proportion between your family and mine, lay aside your religious habit, and become a swineherd as I was in my youth. Only on this condition may we become related to each other." The monk, who was a doctor of Theology and Provincial in his Order, blushed and almost

died of shame at the lesson the Pope gave him to cure him of his ambition, but he took care not to accept the condition.

Finally, a very pious lay-brother, who had been cook of the convent for thirty years, came forward and said to the Pope: "Most Holy Father, I feel exceedingly happy to see you Head of the Church, after having seen you a simple religious. Personally, I need nothing and desire only your blessing. But since Your Holiness has wished that I should be included among the brethren who should ask you for something, I most humbly beg you to have a fountain made in our convent, for we suffer great inconvenience on account of the scarcity of water, as you yourself suffered therefrom when we had the honor to have you among us." This request was the only one which the Pope granted, as the magnificent fountain may still be seen which he ordered to be made in the yard of the convent, as a reward for the good Brother's family spirit. But the requests of the other religious drew tears from the Pope's eyes. "I had expected," he said, "that none of you would think of his personal interest and that all had the common welfare at heart. Should not the obedience you vowed have induced you to renounce all that personally concerned you? Can true religious honorably and with a good conscience desire what could not be advantageous to the whole Order? Your avidity has closed my hands. I believe it would be a crime for me to be so weak as to encourage it by my benefits."

6. "Charity is not puffed up." Only he who is humble, possesses true charity. "To practise charity," said Father Champagnat, "to live in peace with our brethren, to bear their defects, to yield to them for the sake of concord, and not to be humble, is impossible. Nothing is more befitting to combat pride than the practice of fraternal charity and obedience. Show me a community in which the members are guided by obedience, in which they mutually oblige, respect and bear with one another, love one another, and there will never be any discord, but the union will be perfect. But that community whose subjects are vain, sensitive and proud, will resemble a hell, because pride begets insubordination, disputes and all that sows disturbance and discord among men."

Pride brought disorder, revolt and division in heaven among the angels, in the earthly paradise among men, and continues to do the same wherever it penetrates. He who has at heart to live in peace with his brethren, does not dissimulate in speech; he speaks as he thinks, is not vain in his words, is never heard boasting or speaking of himself. Far from parading his talents, his good qualities, he conceals them and does good noiselessly. He is so discreet and modest in his conduct, that, in some manner, his left hand knows not the good he does with his right. Neat, but simple in his attire, nothing in him smacks of vanity or superficiality.

7. "Charity rejoiceth not in evils but in good." He who loves his brethren, is grieved when he sees

them oppressed, despised and persecuted, and feels their ills as if they were his own. Often he is more pained at their sufferings than at his own. He blesses God and rejoices over their good fortune for three reasons: First, because the glory of God, which he loves and seeks above all, is found therein; secondly, on account of the advantages they derive therefrom; and thirdly, because he considers the welfare of his brethren as really his own and actually shares it with them. When a man is in business partnership with others, he is not grieved at their business abilities and success; on the contrary, he finds therein a cause of joy, because the whole company profits thereby, and he shares in the profits.

8. "Charity thinketh no evil." "The two most common and widespread vices," says Cornelius à Lapide, "are an excess of severity and an excess of indulgence; severity towards others and indulgence towards oneself." "Men," says St. Augustine, "are curious about the doings of others and quick at condemning them; but they are slow in amending their own faults." "Why," asks our Saviour, "dost thou see the mote in thy brother's eye, and dost not see the beam in thine own? Or how canst thou tell thy brother: let me take the mote out of thy eye, and yet leavest the beam in thine own? Hypocrite, first take the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see to take the mote out of thy brother's." These words set forth the two great spiritual diseases we are speak-

ing of; judging our neighbor severely, and forgiving ourselves everything evil. We strut about displaying our own virtue, criminally indulgent to our own vices, and indiscreetly exposing and censuring the doings of our neighbor; in a word, devoting all our zeal to harass our neighbor for slight failings that displease us, and allowing our faults to increase unhindered and falling into extreme laxity concerning our own conduct.

A religious who has real charity acts quite differently, for he closes his eyes on the defects of his brethren, and notices only their virtues. He never interprets unfavorably his neighbor's actions, but always as favorably as he can. He who has a good stomach turns even heavy food into healthy juices; he who has a bad stomach turns even healthy foods into bile and injurious humors. In like manner, the upright and charitable soul puts a favorable interpretation on everything; but he who is devoid of charity poisons all things and puts an evil interpretation on very good actions. The charitable man does not condemn his brother even when he sees him committing a fault. In such a case, if he cannot excuse the deed, he excuses the intention, or alleges ignorance, surprise, etc. Or like the holy religious mentioned by St. Bernard, who, beholding one of his brethren committing a sin, exclaimed sighing, "Alas! what he does to-day, I would do to-morrow, if God does not help me!" Another holy religious, whenever he entered a cell that was unclean and in disorder, would say

to himself: "Oh, how happy is this good Brother to make so little account of the exterior, and to have his mind so occupied with heavenly things as not to think of the earthly!" When he entered a cell that was clean and well kept, he would exclaim: "Oh, how careful is Bro. N. concerning the purity of his soul!" Thus he judged favorably of every one, and never said: "That is dirty! This is too nice, too worldly!" as men devoid of charity would say.

9. "Charity beareth all, suffereth all." Yes, the charitable religious is not squeamish or sensitive, and easily bears with want of respect, politeness or due regard, when such shortcomings are the result of a lack of education, without malice or evil intent. He bears in all patience with the defects of his brethren, and by his good example, charitable admonitions and prayers helps to correct them. He puts up with the imperfections, weaknesses and want of progress of the imperfect, leads them kindly on to perfection, guards against being too exacting of them and against loading them with burdens they are unable to carry, lest they grow despondent. He tolerates or only very leniently corrects the defects of character in his pupils, or their faults of levity, and sometimes awaits only a favorable time to correct more serious faults.

A certain Superior was once asked: "Why do you tolerate Bro. N's. defects, and why do you defer reproving him?" "I wait for four things:

first, that the weather may be beautiful, clear and pleasant, for experience tells me that gloomy weather has an evil influence on certain characters and unfits them for accepting a correction; secondly, that the Brother should be cheerful, contented and ready to receive the correction he deserves; thirdly, that God should have disposed his heart and begun already to teach him a lesson, so that I may have only to second divine grace; and fourthly, that I myself may be prepared and have received the grace to perform well that difficult act." Admirable and instructive reply!

10. Finally, "charity believeth all things." A charitable religious believes especially these six points: 1, all the good he hears of his neighbor, of his brethren; 2, that he is the least virtuous of all, that, before God, all are better and more perfect than he; he therefore, always willingly takes the last place and becomes the servant of all; 3, that the evil said of others is usually false, or grossly exaggerated; hence he never listens to slander, detraction, to which he keeps his ears always closed; 4, he willingly believes and accepts the excuses of his brethren (and pupils), and, far from taking pleasure in finding them guilty, he is satisfied to see that they are innocent or, at least, less guilty than was at first supposed; 5, he firmly believes in these words of St. Peter: "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." Accordingly, when he perceives a virtue in his brethren, he does not mind

their slight shortcomings, for in his estimation, that virtue covers them all; 6, he believes that charity is the first, the most excellent and necessary of the virtues, and that, consequently, no effort should be spared to preserve it and promote its growth. And, as this can be done only by repeated acts, he constantly performs acts of charity. And, recalling these words of St. Paul, so full of meaning: "Be ye indebted to no one," he daily pays his debts to his neighbor. Which are these debts? First, practical love, honor and respect; second, bearing with his defects, whatever they may be; third, charitable admonition, if the occasion offers; fourth, help, assistance, favors, whenever required; fifth, constant prayer for his neighbor's wants; and sixth, edification and good example everywhere. Thus does a good religious practise charity, and this charity makes him happy and procures him all the charms of the family life.

10. IN UNION THERE IS STRENGTH. (C)

“A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city, and (their) judgments are like the bars of cities” (Prov. 18.19). Ven. Father Champagnat had long meditated on this; wherefore, he so earnestly recommended to his Brothers union and fraternal charity. “I desire,” he wrote to them in a circular letter, “that union and charity, mentioned by the beloved disciple, should always reign among you; that those, whose duty is to obey, should do so with humility, and that those who command, should do so with gentle charity, for by these means the joy and peace of the Holy Ghost will always be with you.” On another occasion he wrote: “You are convinced that I love all of you in Jesus Christ. Therefore I ardently desire and will that you be united together and love one another as children of the same Father, God, and of the same Mother, the Church, and, in short, as children of Mary.” Another time he summoned the Brothers to the annual retreat in these words: “How pleasant it is for me to think that, in a few days, I shall have the pleasure, when embracing you, to say with the psalmist: ‘Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in

unity.' Very sweet is the consolation to see you all assembled together, having but one heart and one soul, forming but one and the same family, all seeking only the glory of God, the interests of His holy religion, and all combating under the same standard, that of His holy Mother." Imitating our divine Saviour, the Ven. Father's last admonition, when he was about to die, was on brotherly union. "My dear Brothers," he said, "it is with all the affection of my heart, and by all your attachment to me, that I beseech you so to conduct yourselves that holy charity may always be maintained among you. Love one another as Jesus Christ has loved you; let there be among you but one heart and one soul. The most ardent wish of my heart, at this last moment of my life, is that it may always be truly said of the Little Brothers of Mary as of the first Christians: 'See how they love one another! See how perfectly they are united among themselves!'"

Being convinced that in union there is strength, that union secures the obedience of the subjects, the prosperity and the good government of the Institute, Father Champagnat did not fail to recommend several times to Bro. Francis, his successor, and to his assistants, always to agree together and remain constantly united. "You will have," he said, "much trouble; but have confidence, if you are united, God will be with you, for you are doing His work." Brother Francis and his two assistants, through affection for Ven.

Father Champagnat, as well as through virtue and conscientious duty, were most faithful to his counsel, for their union was entire, constant and unalterable. It proved their power and their glory; it imparted to them complete authority over the Brothers, and was the chief cause of the good they accomplished for the Institute. Their union, with its success and benefits, should serve as a model to all who are called to govern a religious Institute.

Brothers Francis, Louis Mary and John Baptist were all three of about the same age and had been unanimously elected by the ninety-two professed Brothers during Father Champagnat's life, to govern the Institute, the first as Superior General and the other two as his assistants. After this election, over which he presided with Father Colin, Father Champagnat seemed greatly pleased. "I am pleased with your choice," he said to the Brothers; "these were the ones I wished for. God be praised for their election." The three Brothers were among the eldest in the Institute; they had lived with the Ven. Founder, had helped him to govern the Institute, and had been especially trained by him. His examples and lessons had not been lost upon them, for they were intimately penetrated with his principles, and had wholly mastered his spirit, for it became the soul, the guide of their administration and of all the works performed in its course. The administration of the Institute was entrusted to

them at a most critical time, in the most difficult circumstances, that is, after the Founder's death, when the Congregation most needed wise and enlightened superiors to direct it, when the past traditions were to be gathered together, and when there was required a revision of the Rule and of the method of teaching, of applying the principles of the Founder, and the completion of his work. The task was evidently a difficult one, and if they fulfilled it perfectly, it was owing especially to their perfect union. And what is truly remarkable and extraordinary, these three Brothers, so different from one another in character, governed the Institute together for more than twenty years without ever manifesting the slightest difference of views, without any one ever being able to surmise that their thoughts ever differed. Whenever a member or an outsider had recourse to any of the three, they met with the same language, the same views, the same appreciation of matters, the same way of treating affairs, the same spirit, and, in short, the same direction. Never did one grant what another had refused; never did one blame or seem to disapprove what another had said or done. Whoever heard them or saw them act, could not help believing that they had but one soul, and that they were all three animated with the very same spirit. This perfect union, which constitutes their glory, was so well known, that practically each of them enjoyed full authority, and what any of the three had promised or done,

was considered as finally settled and beyond all appeal.

One of the ablest and most intelligent of the Brothers, filled with astonishment and admiration at the sight of so perfect and constant a union amid so many occasions, if not of divisions, at least of divergence of views and conduct, exclaimed: "It would be more difficult to divide these three men than to plant a rose-bush in mid-ocean." This saying, although picturesque, is quite appropriate to indicate how intimate their union was, what the Brothers thought about it, and how powerful an influence it exercised over them to maintain them in the spirit of submission and obedience. A venerable priest who had had, on several occasions, to transact some business with them, said one day to a Brother Director: "Your *three* who are, as it were, *only one*, are the most striking confirmation I have ever come across of these words of the Holy Ghost: 'A three-fold cord is not easily broken' " (Eccles. 4. 12). And what rendered this union still more admirable and praiseworthy was the fact that it remained unaltered notwithstanding a number of circumstances best calculated to break or at least weaken it. Bro. Francis, being almost always sick and unable to act directly, was obliged to leave the burden of the administration to his assistants, who divided the work between them, such as the temporal affairs, the direction of the Brothers, etc. They regulated everything, provided

for everything with so perfect a spirit of unity and self-abnegation, that the authority of Bro. Francis, far from being decreased, went on always increasing, so that the Brothers could scarcely perceive that he acted only through his assistants. To show how well they were impressed by such an example, the members of the Chapter of 1860 expressed the wish that a painting should be made representing the three Brothers in a group, united in the same spirit, that it might recall to all the Brothers a fact so well adapted to serve them as a lesson and a model. Happy and blessed are those convents where such a model is imitated and becomes the rule of the religious. Peace, consolation, holy cheerfulness, happiness and the hundred-fold of the good promised by Jesus Christ will be the lot of the members. The prosperity of the works of the Institute, the edification and confidence of the people are the accessories of the communities in which union and charity reign.

Union is absolutely necessary in a religious Institute to prove useful and do good. It was by union that God made all things. When about to create man, he said to Himself: "Let us make man after our own image and likeness." For this, the greatest of His created works on earth, there is the deliberation, agreement and consent of the three divine Persons. The same union appears in man's Redemption. The Father sends His Son as a gift to men; the Son sacrifices

Himself according to the will of His Father, and it was through the operation of the Holy Ghost that the Incarnation took place. It is in the name of the three divine Persons that we are baptized, regenerated and made the children of God. It was by means of union that Jesus Christ founded His Church. "Among the apostles," says St. Jerome, "Peter alone is chosen as the head, so as to avoid all division." Our divine Saviour had this union so much at heart, that He earnestly besought it of His heavenly Father: "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We also are" (John 17.11). Why had He this union so much at heart? Because union is life, dualism, or separation, is death; because union is virtue, and dualism is sin and disorder; because union is strength, prosperity and progress, and dualism is weakness, decadence and nothingness. Unity imparts to heaven its admirable beauty and order. Unity imparts virtue and holiness to the soul, and to the body strength and health. Unity fortifies families, cities and countries. Discord, or division, breaks and destroys, brings on war and destruction. "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be destroyed," says our divine Saviour, and every house divided against itself shall crumble. Even hell itself subsists through union, for if Satan were divided against himself, his kingdom could not stand.

Union effects strength and progress. Even the

pagan Sallust says: "Small things increase by concord, and the greatest are ruined and annihilated by discord." King Agesilaus, being asked why the city of Sparta had no fortifications, replied by showing all the citizens well united together, and saying: "These are the city's ramparts." "When ten are united together, one is as much as ten, for one is in the ten, and the ten are in the one," says St. John Chrysostom; "wherefore each one has twenty hands, twenty eyes, etc., breathes and acts with ten souls, for each one has as much care of the others as of himself; hence each one is capable of effecting very much, because the other nine are at his disposal."

Unity produces happiness. Where there is concord, there also is Jesus Christ, the Blessed Trinity and, consequently, happiness, eternal bliss. The unity of heaven forms the felicity of the saints. "In heaven," says St. Augustine, "there is no envy, no opposite desires, for unity of love reigns there," and, says St. Gregory, "this unity of love so binds the saints together, that each elect who has not received a certain enjoyment as his reward, rejoices that the others have received it, and is as happy as if he himself possessed it."

The grace of unity is the pledge of every good. "I shall give them one soul and one way, and in this manner strength, prosperity, peace and every good shall be with them" (Jer. 32.39). Take

away unity and only ruins remain; separate the branch from its trunk, and it bears no fruit; separate the streamlet from its source, and it dries up. A building is devoid of strength and cannot stand, except through its unity; take away its mortar, its cement and it will crumble. In like manner, concord is the bond that unites together the members of a community. Take away concord, and its members, like wild beasts, will tear one another in pieces, and there will be no more charity, justice, indulgence, or happiness. All this will depart with unity, and the house will become an image of hell.

O holy unity, how necessary art thou, and how great benefits dost thou contain! Come to dwell among us, to reign always over us, for we all wish to live under thy dominion. O holy unity, so nobly taught us by the examples of our first brethren, we are ready to make every sacrifice to preserve thee; be always with us, that we may all have but one heart and one soul, and that it may always be said of us: "See how they love one another! See how they are united among themselves!"

11. WHAT IT IS TO EDUCATE A CHILD. (C)

Ven. Father Champagnat, when he founded his Institute, proposed not only to give primary instruction to children, not only to instruct them in the knowledge of our holy religion, but also to *educate* them. "If there were question only of teaching the children human science," he said, "there would be no need of Brothers, for the school-masters could do it. If we pretend to impart only religious instruction, we could content ourselves with being mere catechists, and gathering the children together an hour each day. But we wish to do better; we wish to train the children, that is, to give them an *education*. For this it behooves us to be teachers, to live among them and to have them long with us.

What, then, does it mean to educate a child? Is it to take care of him, to look after him, to attend to his wants and supply him with food and clothing? By no means. Is it to teach him to read and write, to furnish him the knowledge he will need later on to attend to his temporal affairs? No. Education is a far more exalted work. Is it to teach him a trade to enable him to exercise a profession? No, no! Education is not an apprenticeship. Is it to teach him politeness

and civility, to train him in the usages of society, in the ways of the world? No. All this is good and necessary for the child, but does not make up real education, it is only its bark, the least part of it. To procure to a child all these goods and advantages, is to rear his body, but not to train his soul; it is to teach him to live for time, but not for eternity; it is to train him for the world, but not for God, who is his sole end, and not for heaven, his destiny, his country.

God created man in innocence and justice. If Adam had not sinned, man's nature would not have been corrupted, and his offspring would not have needed any education, but would, at their birth, have been endowed with all the perfection of their nature, or at least, would have reached it by themselves in proportion to the development of their faculties. But in consequence of the original degradation, man is born with the germ of all vices, as well as of all virtues. He is a lily, but surrounded by thorns; a vine that needs pruning; a diamond, but a diamond in the rough that needs cutting and polishing; a field in which the householder has sown good seed, but in which the enemy also has sown cockle. The end of education is to pull out these thorns, to prune the vine, to cut and polish this diamond, to cultivate this field and eradicate the cockle. Therefore to educate a child means:

1. *To make religion known to him, that is, to teach him the end of man, the necessity of salva-*

tion, death, judgment, heaven, hell, eternity, the malice of sin, the commandments of God and of the Church, the life, mysteries, virtues, and sufferings of Jesus Christ, what He did for the salvation of mankind, the sacraments He instituted, the abundant Redemption He acquired for us, what we must do to apply it to ourselves and to be worthy children of God, and finally to merit the eternal glory destined for us, which Jesus Christ ascended into heaven to prepare for us.

2. *To repress the child's evil inclinations*, correct his vices and defects, such as pride, indocility, duplicity, selfishness, gluttony, rudeness, ingratitude, license, sloth, etc. It is necessary to stifle these vices at their very birth; the worm must be killed before it becomes a serpent. A slight ill should be cured before it turns into a deadly disease. The very first moment we discover a defect in a child, a kind reprimand, a severe look, a light penance suffices to remedy the evil and kill the evil germ. But, if we let it grow, it will soon become a habit which all our later efforts will fail to correct. "The incipient defects and vices which we look upon as mere trifles, and therefore neglect to repress, are," says Tertullian, "germs of sins indicating a life of crime." Thorns, when they begin to grow, do not sting; serpents at their birth, have no venom; but in the course of time the points of the thorns harden and are as sharp as needles, and serpents grow venomous with age. The same is the case with a child's vices and de-

fects. If allowed to grow and develop, they become tyrannical passions, criminal habits which resist everything and are incorrigible.

3. *To train the heart of the child* and develop all his good dispositions, to cast into his heart the seed of all virtues, and endeavor to make him docile, humble, compassionate, charitable, grateful, meek, patient, generous, constant; to impart to him the means of practising these virtues; to promote their growth and lead them to perfection. The heart of the child is a virgin soil, receiving seed for the first time. If that heart is well prepared and cultivated, and if the seed is good, it will produce abundant and durable fruits. The skilled gardener bends, engrafts and subjects the tree to treatment while it is young and tender. The potter forms his vase before the clay gets hard. In like manner, we must train the child in virtue, when he is young, pliant and innocent, for then good principles are easily impressed in his mind and heart. At first, he will do right, only because he is commanded to do it; but soon, as his reason becomes developed, he will do it out of love and choice, so that he will by and bye practise virtue without much difficulty, but even with pleasure. "Constant experience," says Pope St. Pius V, "proves that children trained in virtue in their infancy, almost always lead a Christian, pure and exemplary life, and sometimes even reach a high degree of sanctity; but those, whose training in virtue has been neglected, usually lead a life de-

void of virtue, full of vices and disorders which prove their ruin.”

4. *To form the child's conscience.* To do this we must, first, impart to him solid religious instruction, and impress on him the conviction that it behooves him to conduct himself, not according to the opinions of the world, but by the principles of the law of God, by motives of faith and the dictates of his conscience; secondly, inspire him with intense hatred and horror of sin, and most deeply inculcate on him the maxim that sin is the greatest of all evils and virtue the only real good; thirdly, teach him that sin and virtue proceed from the heart producing acts of virtue or consenting to evil, and that, consequently, he must watch over his heart, over his thoughts, desires and affections, and that it does not suffice to keep the law of God exteriorly and live honorably before the world, but that he should love the law of God, observe it everywhere and never act contrary to the dictates of his conscience; fourthly, inspire him with a sincere love of truth, with an extreme aversion for lying, and often recommend him to be sincere in confession.

5. *To train the child in piety,* to make him understand the need, the necessity and advantages of prayer; to accustom him from his infancy to pray with respect, modesty, attention and recollection; to rear him in the practice of Christian piety, and enable him, to find in prayer and pious exercises his happiness, consolation and strength.

We should never cease insisting that piety is the all-important point in education. If we succeed in causing it to penetrate into the child's heart, it will cause all the virtues to spring up therein, and, like a conflagration, it will visibly consume and destroy all vices and defects. Make the child pious, make him pray, make him approach the sacraments, inspire him with a tender love for Jesus, with a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and you will make him good, pure, docile, honest, courageous, active, meek, humble and constant. Make him truly pious and his character will become open, frank, amiable, obliging; make him pious, and in proportion as his love of God increases, his defects will be blotted out, will melt away and disappear, as snow melts and disappears when exposed to the warm rays of a burning sun. Cast a strong dose of piety into the heart of a child and it will cause all the virtues to spring forth, and all his defects and evil habits to die in him.

6. *To cause the child to love virtue and our holy religion.* The child will love his holy religion and cling to it through conviction and conscientiously, if he understands well these four truths: 1, religion is the greatest grace God has given to men; 2, every commandment of God is a real benefit and a source of happiness for man even in a temporal aspect; 3, religion combats in us only our enemies, that is, the devil, sin, the vices and evil passions that degrade us and become the sources

of all our misfortunes; 4, virtue alone makes us happy even in this life; duty and happiness are synonymous and inseparable. Faith teaches us that joy, consolation and felicity are the lot of the virtuous, and that remorse, anguish, tribulation everywhere follow evil-doers, the wicked.

7. *To train the child's will and teach him to obey.* The great plague of our age is the spirit of independence; every one wishes to have his own way, and believes himself better fitted to command than to obey. The child refuses to submit to his parents; citizens seek to evade the laws and to make legislation subservient to their individual interests; numbers of Catholics practically despise the laws of God and of His Church. Insubordination is found in all classes of society. We therefore render great service to the Church, to society, to the family, and especially to the child, if we bend his will and cause him to obey. To train the child in obedience, we should, first, never command or forbid him anything that is not just and reasonable; never prescribe anything to him that shocks his reason or smacks of injustice, tyranny or caprice; for such orders serve only to disturb his mind and to inspire him with a deep contempt for his teacher and a strong repugnance to the things commanded.

Secondly, do not command or forbid many things at one time, for such multiplicity confuses him, fills his heart with discouragement, and causes him to forget a part of the things enjoined or prohib-

ited. All unnecessary constraint sows discouragement and a bad spirit. Thirdly, never command him anything too difficult or impossible, for such commands irritate children and make them stubborn and rebellious, instead of docile. Fourthly, exact the full and entire execution of the task imposed. To give certain orders, to designate the lessons to be learnt, and not require the children to comply fully therewith, renders them disobedient, spoils their will, and accustoms them to make but little account of commands and prohibitions.

Fifthly, establish a strong discipline in school and require the pupils fully to submit to it. Such a discipline is one of the best means of imparting to the will strength, energy, the habit of obedience and of the holy violence necessary to be faithful to grace, to struggle against passion and to practise virtue. Such a discipline exercises the will without ceasing through the sacrifices it imposes at every moment, obliges the children to overcome the habit of mental dissipation, to keep silent and recollected, to pay attention to their lessons, to watch over their deportment, to repress their impatience, to become punctual, to study their lessons, to perform their tasks, to be respectful towards their teachers, polite and obliging towards their companions, and to bend and accommodate their character to many things that are naturally disagreeable to them. But this multiplicity of acts of obedience, this series of little victories which the pupils gain over themselves and their

defects, are the most appropriate means of training their will, of making it strong and supple, and of imparting to it constancy.

8. *To form the child's judgment.* Of all the faculties judgment is the one that needs the most to be protected, formed and developed. In fact, of what is a man capable who is devoid of good judgment, of practical common sense, who has no tact and is unable to get along in life? Of nothing! He is unfit for either spiritual or temporal matters; he is incapable of either Christian or social virtues. One cannot be virtuous, unless he is a man, that is, possessed of common sense, or judgment. Judgment cannot be imparted to him who does not possess it, for it is a natural gift. But judgment is progressive; like the other faculties of the soul, it can constantly increase, be strengthened and developed. Hence it is of the utmost importance to cultivate this faculty in a child and to enable him to continue to improve and perfect his reason. Therefore in the first place, it is necessary to accustom children to reflect before speaking, before judging, for false notions originate in incomplete apprehension and examination of things, and precipitation in judging them exposes us to this intellectual disease, for we can only superficially know what we too hurriedly look at.

Secondly, we should often repeat to the child this maxim of St. Augustine: "Reflection is the principle of all that is good." Accustom him to

regulate his conduct and judgment by the great principles of Christian morality, which is the true light of the mind, the torch of reason and the source of wisdom. Thirdly, we should, in our instructions, train him to seize on the important point, the chief object of a question, of a lesson, of an historical narrative, and not allow him to get lost in insignificant details. Fourthly, we should often cause him to direct his attention to the details of his conduct, that he may discover in what he failed against common sense and tact, how he put aside the principal for the accessory, the brilliant for the solid, or principles for changeable or erroneous views. Fifthly, we should apply him to studies, to some task requiring reflection, and exercise him in combining his ideas, in joining and comparing them together, in drawing consequences from principles, and in accounting for things. Sixthly, we should repeat to him without ceasing that reason, wisdom and virtue are three inseparable things which are found only in the mean, and never in the extremes, and that, therefore reason and good judgment exclude all exaggeration, all chimerical perfection, all excess. Seventhly, we should endeavor to keep the child innocent and virtuous, for passion blinds and falsifies the judgment.

9. *To form and polish his character.* A good character is a benefit from heaven, a treasure and a source of happiness for the family. A bad or disagreeable character is a misfortune for its pos-

sector and for all who live with him, for it is a cause of discord, a scourge in the family. But, God be praised, character can be modified, corrected and ameliorated. The most defective, the very worst character can be reformed by a good education. To fulfil this difficult task, the teacher should, first, study the child's character, tastes, inclinations, defects and aptitude, for he cannot otherwise know what ought to be reformed, and how to cultivate, develop and perfect the good qualities. Secondly, he should leave the child an honest and respectful liberty, for if he keeps the child under too great a restraint, he shall never know or be able to correct his defects. Thirdly, he should wage an incessant war on the child's selfishness, harshness, pride, insolence, impoliteness, sensitiveness and other vices which spoil the character, promote disorder, ruin peace and fraternal charity. Fourthly, he should strive to make the child polite, obliging, complacent, affable, respectful and grateful, and teach him how to conduct himself towards every one, especially towards his parents and superiors.

10. *To watch constantly over the child*, to make every effort to preserve him from evil habits, to keep him from bad company, from bad example and from all evil contact, and to protect him against whatever may endanger his innocence, compromise his virtue, and fill his mind with false or evil principles.

11. *To inspire him with love of work and ac-*

custom him to habits of punctuality, order and cleanliness, and to convince him that prosperity, success and easy circumstances in life originate in industry, economy, modesty and temperance.

12. *To impart to him the knowledge requisite for his position and condition*, to inspire him with love and contentment in his condition, however humble it may be, and teach him the means to improve it, to make it happy and honorable, and to sanctify himself in it.

13. *To watch over the child's health* and preserve it from all dangers, to keep his members sound and enable them to acquire the strength and vigor, of which they are susceptible, in a word, to remove him from all accidents, from all that might prove injurious to the perfect integrity of his senses and of his members.

14. Finally, *to educate a child is to afford him all the means requisite to acquire the whole perfection of his being*. And as man has the privilege of being always able to make progress and perfect himself, and to become "perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect," the teacher should take care that his pupil should not leave his care without realizing that he must still continue his education, that is, continue to instruct himself, to reform himself by self-watchfulness, by combating his passions, correcting his defects and striving to become always better and more virtuous.

Such is the end, the object of education, such is the august ministry entrusted to the teacher of

Christian youth. Such a work is most holy and sublime, for it is a continuation of the divine work, in that it is most noble and exalted, the sanctification of souls. It is a most holy work, for in it there is question of forming saints for heaven; it is most difficult, for it requires great devotedness and the spirit of self-sacrifice; it cost Jesus Christ His blood, His very life, and the teacher cannot be a joint-worker with Jesus Christ and His helper in saving souls, unless by sacrificing and immolating himself.

It is, therefore, evident that we do not educate a child by merely teaching him reading, writing, grammar, mathematics, geography, history, physics and the diverse sciences, or even by hearing them recite the catechism. The teacher who limits his work to the above, does not really educate his pupils, for he omits the chief requirements of education, which consist in training the children in virtue, in correcting their defects, in inspiring them with the love of their holy religion, in accustoming them to practise it faithfully, in a word, in making them pious and truly practical Catholics.

The father of Socrates, who was a sculptor, showed him a block of marble, saying: "A man is enclosed in that block, and I will make him come out with blows of this hammer." When you are given a child who is still ignorant, uncouth, uneducated, living only with his senses, you can say with greater reason than the father of Socrates: "In

that child there is a man, a good father of family, a good citizen, a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ, a saint, an elect of heaven and I am going to make all this out of him by instructing him in his duties and his destiny, by reforming and training him and making him become what he can and should be." The child reaches slowly the exercise of his understanding, and this only through communication with others enjoying its benefits; he needs the assistance of other human beings to acquire the integral use of his faculties. But he needs it especially to be trained in virtue, to be prepared to receive the principles of faith, of the graces and virtues necessary to attain his supernatural end. Man is the great means God uses to raise man, to save man. This glorious mission is always difficult, often painful and bleeding, for we can save souls only by self-devotedness and self-sacrifice in their behalf. God considers such a ministry to be so glorious, that He gives the glory of it to His divine Son. "The Word was made flesh," in order to be man's teacher, model and Saviour. What a glory for a religious to be associated with the Son of God in so sublime a mission!

12. NECESSITY OF EDUCATION. (C)

“What, think you, shall this child be?” (Luke 1. 66). This was the question asked by the relatives of Zachary and Elizabeth concerning St. John Baptist, and the same question is naturally asked concerning every child at its birth. The Holy Ghost has answered it by telling us that man follows his first way and will not deviate from it in his old age. The child will be what education makes him, that is, a good Christian and a virtuous citizen, if he is well brought up; a vicious man, an enemy of God and religion, a disturber of public peace, if left to himself, if not properly educated. Education, according to an Arab proverb, is the diadem of the child; in other words, from the education he receives depends his whole future and success, all that he will be in the world, all that he will do in it, be it good or evil. And as human society is constantly recruited from the children who have left school, as the ocean is kept full by the rivers pouring their waters into it, we may truly say that the diadem of society is in education, and that education is the mould in which society takes its form, that is, its spirit, its principles. Wherefore an ancient writer had reason to say: “Education is everything, is the man; society, religion, all

proceeds from it, good and evil, just as the river comes from its source, and as the oak is from the acorn." Even the pagans acknowledge this truth. "Good education," says Plato, "is the basis of society, of the nation; the education of youth is absolutely necessary for the proper formation of man's whole life, and is the most important affair with which the state should occupy itself; the first duty of the ruler is to provide the means for the honest and religious education of the children from their infancy."

This is the reason why, at all times and in all places, the good, on one side, and the wicked, on the other, struggle so obstinately and desperately for the empire of education. Under the apparently simple question as to who shall teach the children reading, writing, etc., there is concealed, in the last analysis, the question of sovereignty, of triumph between good and evil, for the child will naturally belong to one of these two parties, that is, to the party which first took possession of his heart. If the majority of the children are brought up in a Christian manner, the reign of good and virtue is assured; if, however, they are not so educated, or badly educated, the reign of evil will prevail, and society will rush headlong to its ruin.

Education is for the child what cultivation is for the soil. However good the soil may be, if it is not cultivated, it produces only weeds, briars and thorns. In like manner, however good a child's disposition may be, however rich his talents and

capacity, if he lacks a good education, if his soul is not properly cultivated, he will be devoid of virtues, his life will count as nought for good, or will produce only wild and bitter fruits and dead works. Wherefore, as cultivation is absolutely necessary to rid a field of its weeds and fit its soil to produce good plants, in like manner education is indispensable to correct the child's growing defects, to direct his inclinations and to prepare his soul to produce fruits of virtue.

What is the life of a man who is uneducated, who has not been trained in piety and virtue? It is like a year which has no spring, in which the summer has nothing to ripen and the autumn nothing to harvest, and the whole course of such a life will be a dreary winter in which everything is frozen, in which light itself lacks brilliancy and all nature is barren. Whence comes the flood of the passions that now threaten the very existence of society? Whence the precocious perversity of the young who are becoming the scourges of society? From the lack of a good education, from an education devoid of religious principles. "Why," asks St. Bernard, "do we see so many persons so full of vice and so devoid of virtue? Because they lacked a good education in their youth, were ill-brought up, were not corrected of their faults and not trained in the practice of virtue."

What can we expect of a child who is left to himself, or ill-educated, unless a disorderly life? The older he grows, the deeper he will sink into vice

and will go so far as to despise everything. At first he sins only through weakness; then he will be passionate in his evil course, and will be proud of his very excesses. "He will form detestable habits," says St. Ambrose, "which will gradually become insurmountable." If you then urge him to reform and change his life, he will answer: "I am now too old to change; I have been brought up so, and I cannot act otherwise." Every uncorrected evil deed strengthens the passion; passion corrupts the judgment, the judgment then perverts the will, the depraved will takes pleasure and glories in evil, and the evil habit thus formed becomes, as it were, a necessity, a second nature. To make us realize the irresistible power and the extent of the misfortune of such habits, the Holy Ghost uses these energetic and terrifying words: "The bones of the wicked shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust" (Job 20. 11), so tenaciously are they inoculated in his very nature, so deeply are they inherent in his being. "I have been badly brought up," Peter the Great of Russia often said; "far from repressing the excesses of my ferocious nature, my teachers flattered them. I feel it, am now ashamed of it, and yet so great is the power of habit, that I am unable to control my angry and barbarous dispositions. Although I have reformed the manners of my people, I am not able to reform my own."

Education is for the child what the pipe is for water. "As water," says St. Jerome, "follows

without difficulty the course of the pipe through which it is led, so also the child easily follows the course he has been made to take." "A young man according to his way," says the Holy Ghost, "even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22. 6). The experience of all ages confirms this, and there is not a man but feels that, if age has cooled his imagination, formed his judgment, and added to his knowledge, it has left him his first tastes, his first propensities, his first morals. Men are therefore, about the same with regard to virtue and vice as they were in their youth, Christians or unbelievers, sober or intemperate, chaste or dissolute, in short, such as education made them. As to morals or conduct, we can usually judge what a man will be from what he is actually in his youth, and *vice versa*.

There were in all nineteen kings of the Ten Tribes of Israel; every one of them had been wicked in his youth, and not a single one amended his life before his death. The Tribe of Juda had also nineteen kings from Solomon to the Babylonian Captivity; of these only five were good, the others were all wicked. The good kings had been good in their youth and remained good all their life. The majority of the wicked kings had been wicked in their youth and did not amend, so true it is that man does not depart in his old age from the way he followed in his youth.

The child's manhood depends wholly on his education; if his education has been neglected or

has been bad, he will be addicted to vices and will follow in his youth the road leading to perdition, and his steps, formed in the steep declivity of sin and vice, will precipitate him into all its excesses and infallibly bring him to endless punishment. On the other hand, a good education is never fruitless even in those who through bad example or passion are led astray from the good principles taught them. The holy truths, deeply engraved in their souls, are never entirely effaced. In vain the violent winds of the passions shake the tree and knock down its fruits and even break some of the branches, the stript trunk will always remain firm over its roots and receive therefrom the nourishing sap, which will, in due season, supply it with new branches and enable it again to bear abundant fruits. The conversions we constantly witness, the return to good morals, to the practice of virtue, are certainly benefits of a Christian education and fruits of the faith and piety sown early in the hearts of children. Dionysius, the Tyrant, had in his power the young son of Dion, his enemy. Dionysius imagined a singular revenge against Dion, which was so much the more cruel, as it seemed the more mild. Instead of imprisoning or putting the boy to death, he undertook to corrupt all the good qualities of the boy's soul, by leaving him entirely to himself and without education, for he gave orders that the boy should always have his own way. The boy, as he grew up unrestrained, yielded to his passions, gave himself up to every

vice. And when Dionysius saw him totally depraved, he sent him to his father. The latter procured him the most virtuous and the wisest teachers he could find, they used every means, every exertion to reform the young man, but all in vain, for, rather than mend his ways, he threw himself down from the roof of a house and broke his neck.

13. A WELL-TAUGHT CATECHISM LESSON. (C)

Ven. Father Champagnat, in his instructions to his Brothers, was wont often to repeat: "A well-taught Catechism lesson is worth more than all the most painful penances." A young Brother asked him for an explanation of this, and received this answer: "A Catechism lesson, well-taught is, first, a Catechism lesson well-prepared by study; secondly, it is watered with prayer; thirdly, kept up by good example, and fourthly, well-adapted to the capacity of the children by a good method and an industrious zeal."

1. *Well prepared by study.* It is a certain truth that the fruits of the Catechism lesson will be proportionate to the preparation. He who sows but little, shall reap but little; he who sows nothing, shall reap nothing. The catechist who is full of respect for the word of God and of zeal for the sanctification of his pupils, and therefore properly studies our holy religion and prepares his explanations of its truths and duties, will always produce some fruit, and his instructions will never be without effect. He who, on the contrary, does not make a proper preparation, renders it useless to his pupils; the sloth that prevented him from

studying and foreseeing what he should say, will be the cause why the children will not listen to him and will not be impressed by what he says. How can he expect that his pupils will listen attentively to what he made no effort to prepare! He has, then, no right to complain of the children's inattention, nor of the want of fruit, which he made no effort to produce.

It is very rash to teach Catechism without preparation; it is a want of respect for God and for the sacred truths He has revealed; it is to expose ourselves to speak incorrectly about them, and to expose the children to conceive disgust and aversion for the instructions, and even for religion itself. We cannot instruct others in what we do not know well ourselves, nor can our instructions actually instruct, unless we have well studied and digested them. This is true especially in all that pertains to religion. Therefore, a catechist should be so well versed in our holy religion as to be able to impart his knowledge with fruit to even the dumbest minds; but this he cannot do, unless he has studied to make his instructions clear, simple, practical and interesting. And this is absolutely necessary in Catholic schools, otherwise there would be only a nominal difference between Catholic schools and merely secular schools, and the most important part of the children's education would be wanting, that is, the religious training. What a disgrace would it be for Catholic schools and religious teachers, if the profane sciences were taught

therein more carefully than religion! To teach Catechism properly and with durable fruit, the catechist should have a thorough knowledge of Sacred or Bible History and be acquainted, to a certain extent, with Church History and the Lives of the principal saints.

Before proceeding to give an instruction in Catechism, the catechist should, first, either know by heart or read several times very attentively, the lesson he is to explain; secondly, note the most important points to which he wishes to draw the attention of the children; thirdly, foresee the secondary or special questions he ought to ask on these points, and so connect them together as to develop the truth or the matter clearly and bring it within the grasp of even the dullest minds; fourthly, prepare the historical illustrations, anecdotes, and appropriate comparisons explanatory and confirmatory of his explanations; and fifthly, prepare likewise the practical conclusions he intends to give at the end of his instruction.

2. A Catechism lesson well taught is always *watered with prayer*. “Your instructions, your counsels and even your corrections,” said Father Champagnat, “are seeds which you sow in the children’s minds and hearts; but to make them grow and bear fruit, you must water them with prayer. The soil produces nothing without moisture; and without prayer we can do nothing either for ourselves or for others. The more defects certain children have, the more difficult they are to guide;

and the less they profit by your instructions and your care, and the more also it behooves you to pray for them. Prayer alone can win such children over to God."

Prayer is necessary to enable us to move the heart. Study imparts the knowledge of religion, but prayer imparts the warmth and unction to penetrate and soften the heart. "A word of a pious catechist who is inflamed with divine love," says St. Alphonsus, "produces more fruit than a hundred instructions of a tepid theologian." "To strike hearts and win them to God," says St. Vincent de Paul, "burning words are needed, which resemble darts of the fire of divine love." But it is only prolonged prayer and meditation that enkindle the hearts of evangelical laborers; it is at the foot of the crucifix or near Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament that a catechist will draw the unction which moves, the heavenly fire which enlightens, enkindles and converts hearts." "The best means of persuading," says St. John Baptist de la Salle, "is to draw them from God, their fountain." Wherefore, a day spent in the regular observance, in recollection, punctuality, in all the spiritual exercises, is the best preparation for teaching Catechism.

A religious, who lacks the spirit of piety, will never perform anything great; he may become popular, but he will produce no fruit. We are sometimes astonished at the classes of talented, able and zealous teachers, in which the spirit of piety lan-

guishes, and at other classes, whose teachers are not noted for ability, or talent, in which the pupils are very edifying by their piety. The reason of this difference in the pupils is to be found in the lack of piety in the first named teachers. "In vain do the teachers exert themselves," says St. Augustine, "if the Holy Ghost does not teach interiorly, all their efforts are vain." How many teachers there are, who, after a whole year of admonitions, exhortations, do not produce in their pupils an earnest desire to be better! Why this lack of result? Because the hearts of the teachers are not moved, because they fail to draw from their prayers sentiments that move souls, and because the Holy Ghost does not verify the words they utter.

Piety imparts the experience of spiritual things; this science is experimental and practical. He who speaks of spiritual things only according to books, speaks but coldly and very imperfectly. St. Thomas says we can judge a thing in two ways, either because we know it ourselves by our own experience, or only speculatively or by our reading. The former is, beyond all doubt, the better and the more secure. For instance, a chaste man knows far better than an unchaste moralist the excellence and pleasures of chastity. In like manner, we can appreciate the pains and burning sensations of fever when we have it, than from the explanations of physicians. He who sticks his finger into the fire, knows more of the pain caused

by burning, than from all the descriptions ever given about them. "He who tastes honey," says St. Alphonsus, "knows it better than all the philosophers who have reflected over it and explained its properties. But the science of the saints is not acquired from books, but in mental prayer, in which Jesus Christ Himself is the teacher, and the book is the Saviour's Cross and Wounds."

"Approach ye the Lord (by prayer), and be ye enlightened" (Ps. 33. 6). God will then impart to you the knowledge of spiritual things, teach you to discern the spirits, the best means of combating vice, of correcting the defects of your pupils and inspiring them with love for their religion. "We can sometimes," says St. Alphonsus, "learn more in one hour of mental prayer, than in ten years of study in books." Blessed Albert the Great was wont to say: "In divine science we make more progress by prayer than by study, for, says the wise man, "I desired an upright judgment and God gave it to me; I invoked the Lord, and He filled me with the spirit of wisdom and understanding." "The understanding of a holy man sometimes discovers the truth better than seven sentinels watching from a high place to see what is going on," says the Holy Ghost. "Taste ye and see how sweet the Lord is" (Ps. 33. 9). It is not said: "Study," or "seek in books," but "taste"; that is, experience it, practise your holy religion, love and serve God faithfully, and you shall know, by your own experience, how lovely He

is, how beautiful is virtue, and how happy are they who live virtuously. The more we love God, the better we know Him, and the better we are able to make others know and love Him.

3. *Supported by good example.* Good example is the first lesson the teacher should give his pupils. "So let your light shine before men," says our divine Saviour, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven" (Mat. 5. 16) by imitating them. Why does Jesus Christ, who tells us elsewhere to conceal our good works, to pray in secret, so to give alms that our left hand may not know what our right hand is doing, command us to cause our light to shine before men, that is, to perform our good work so that they may see them? "To teach us," says St. Augustine, "that they who are called to lead others, should not only be, but also appear good and holy, for as they need a good conscience to save their soul, they need a good reputation in order to be able to save the souls of others." St. Paul exhorts his favorite disciple, Timothy, to "be the model of the faithful in all things." The first duty of the religious who teaches, is to teach the children by his good example. His actions should be like an uninterrupted Catechism class, teaching his pupils to live like good Christians. His life should be a living Gospel, in which each child may read how he ought to act, in order to imitate Jesus Christ and become a perfect Christian. In a word, the teaching religious ought to be a model of

virtue and be able to say to his pupils like St. Paul: "Be ye my imitators, as I am of Christ."

Good example is the shortest way to lead pupils to virtue, first, because men, and especially children believe rather what they see than what they hear; hence one good example is more persuasive than one hundred instructions; secondly, because example proves that what is taught can be done, and this more deeply impresses the children and induces them to do good; and thirdly, because children naturally imitate what they see. "Children," says St. Basil, "are like parrots and monkeys. The former repeat what they hear, and the latter do what they see. Children are likewise imitative." Hence nature has made children curious, and their eyes eagerly seek everywhere instructions and examples. Without the teacher being aware of it, they study his character, his good and bad qualities, and consider themselves justified in doing as he does. He has, then, as many scrutinizers and imitators, as he has pupils. Therefore, it is not enough for the religious teacher to hear the pupils recite the Catechism lesson and to explain it to them, he must support his teaching by the example of every virtue; his good example will avail more than all else. "If you wish your pupils to do good," says St. John Baptist de la Salle, "do it yourself; you will thus inspire them with the love and desire of virtue by your wise and well-ordered conduct more than by anything you can say to them."

4. *Adapted to the capacity of the pupils* by a good method and diligent zeal. Instructions to children should possess three qualities: method, brevity, clearness. Nothing so pleases children and helps their memory as a good method. An instruction, replete with good matter and with striking and luminous traits, if not methodical, is like a collection of beautiful objects lined together in utter confusion. An instruction that is methodical is like a beautifully laid out park in which we may roam about a whole day without getting tired. After seeing the former, we have only a confused idea of its beauties; but after seeing the latter, we remember it so well as never to forget it.

Brevity consists, first, in explaining the lesson no longer than the time prescribed; secondly, in speaking but little, and in making the children speak much; thirdly, the accessory questions should be very short, clear and precise; fourthly, never deviate from the subject, avoid all indiscreet, deep, subtile questions.

Clearness is a result of the simplicity of thought and exactness of expression. To be clear, the thoughts should be within the capacity of the children, and presented or exposed in such a manner, that the children, if they pay attention, cannot fail to understand and grasp their meaning. Clearness of expression consists in expressing the thoughts in clear terms and simple style; in avoiding figurative, far-fetched and technical expressions and everything that is calculated to confuse

the matter of the instruction or the minds of the children. Ven. Father Champagnat never failed to admonish the Brothers who failed in these points.

14. THE HOLY RESPECT DUE TO THE CHILD. (C)

I. What is the Child, whom it behooves us to respect?

1. He is the most noble and perfect of the visible creatures. He is "a great thing" (Prov. 26.6)." "He is the greatest miracle of 'God,'" says St. Augustine. The child is the masterpiece of God's hands; he is so noble and excellent, that God charges His angel to guard, serve and care for him. He is "the glory of God" (1. Cor. 11.7). "The light of the Lord's countenance is signed upon him" (Ps. 4.7). He is "God's representative on earth, all visible creatures are subject to him and destined for his use and service, he is the king of the universe, crowned with glory and honor" (Ps. 8. 5-9). "To him God," says Bossnet, "gave original justice and uprightness, immortality and the empire of the world." For him God created and preserves the world and causes all creatures to act. It is for his use, health and contentment that the heavens are bright and roll majestically over his head; that the sun shines, the stars give their light, the winds blow, the clouds are formed, rain falls, rivers flow, the earth produces all kinds of plants,

animals live and reproduce themselves, and all nature labors and is in motion:

2. The child is the image and likeness of God. Like God, he is activity; he has life, he reasons, he loves; like the Father, he has being; like the Son, he has understanding; like the Holy Ghost, he has love. Like the three Divine Persons, he possesses in his being, reason and love, a similar life and happiness; he cannot be deprived of any of these without losing all. Being created in the image of God, he has a mind possessing almost an infinite capacity for knowledge; he can know a whole world and imagine an indefinite number of other worlds; he knows material things and spiritual things; he can know creatures and their Creator; he can speak of everything and reason about the most hidden and abstract things. His memory is like a dictionary of innumerable ideas, "as an immense hall in which are found heaven, the earth, the ocean and all that I have known," says St. Augustine. His will can love goods of all kinds, even the infinite Good. His will is so noble and so grand as to be satiated with no good less than God Himself! His free-will is so free, absolute and powerful, that all creatures combined, the angels included, cannot compel it to will what it does not wish. God alone has full dominion over it, and yet He respects its liberty. In fine, the child, however weak and helpless he appears, is, nevertheless, a truly sublime creature, and bears in his nature, in the elevation, power and harmony

of his faculties, in his whole being, the seal and the very likeness of God.

3. The child is the son of God (Rom. 8. 46), the son of the Most High (Ps. 81). Yes, however small, weak, infirm, he is not only called, but he is truly the son of God, were he clothed even in rags (John 3. 12). Yes, God is his Father, his Model, and wishes him to be, like Himself, great, holy and perfect.

4. The child is the conquest of the Saviour, the price of His precious blood, a member of the body of Jesus Christ and His brother; the temple of the Holy Ghost, the object of God's complacency. The child is the image of the Child Jesus, the souvenir of His Childhood, weakness, humility and docility, the lovely creature He thus calls to Himself: "Suffer little children to come to Me;" he is His delight; "My delight is to be with the children of men;" he is the friend and favorite of the Saviour, who loves, caresses and blesses the children and takes great interest in their education, for He has a special love for them.

5. The child is the hope of heaven, the friend and brother of the angels and saints; the heir of the heavenly kingdom and of the eternal reward. This humble child is born to become king in time and in eternity. If he worthily wears his earthly crown, the heavenly crown shall be his also.

6. The child is what is most beautiful and

lovely on earth, "the flower and ornament of mankind," says St. Macarius; that first age of life so sweet to look at, so lovely to cultivate, so easy to train in the practice of the most holy duties. The child is a pure and simple heart to which religion presents itself with confidence, who has no selfish interests to defend against her, and allows himself to be attracted by her tender maternal voice. The child is an innocent soul, whose passions have not yet disturbed his peaceful rest, whose uprightness has not been altered by the lies, deceits and illusions of the world. The child is a happy being that seems to emit the odor of a heavenly origin, and possesses a peculiar nobility and dignity not usually found in men; he is simplicity, candor, innocence, the joy of the present and the hope of the future.

7. The child is your brother, your fellow-man, the love of your love, another self. He has the same heavenly Father as you, the same end and destiny, the same hope, is called to the same bliss. He is your traveling companion in time, in exile, and will be your joint heir and partner in the heavenly country.

8. The child is the field God has given you to cultivate, a tender shoot, a weak plant; but he will be one day a large tree loaded with the fruit of the virtues, and projecting far out in every direction. He is a weak, tiny stream, an incipient fountain, destined to become a majestic river, if you, like the skilful workman of Holy Writ, en-

deavor to direct its docile waters, and prevent its being contaminated by foreign impure and bitter waters. He is the object of your labors, fatigue and of the exercise of your virtues. He will be your consolation at death, your defense at the divine tribunal, your crown and your glory in heaven.

9. The child is the blessing of God, the hope of the earth, of which he is already the wealth and treasure, and will be later on its strength and glory. He is the hope of his country and of all mankind renewing and rejuvenating themselves in him. He is especially the hope of his family, whose joy he is already and will be later on their honor and glory. The child, in a word, is all mankind; a man, neither more nor less; he has a right to all manner of respect, and owes respect to all. Such is the child whom we are bound to respect.

II. What we should respect in the child.

We must respect especially his innocence. But what kind of respect do we owe his innocence? "The respect we show to the saints and their relics," says Massillon; "nothing on earth is so great, so worthy of our homage as innocence." Let us respect in children their beautiful innocence, that precious treasure of the first grace of baptism, which they still possess and we all have lost. We publicly honor the saints who had lost it but recovered it by penance; why should we not

respect, in like manner, children in whom dwells the gift of justice and holiness? Let us, then, look upon them as with a kind of religious veneration, as pure temples wherein resides the majesty and glory of God, and which Satan's breath has not defiled. They are precious deposits entrusted to our care, over which it behooves us to watch carefully, esteeming them as much as the relics of martyrs in our altars, honored and revered by the faithful. Were we thus to consider them by the light of faith, we would not imagine that we demean ourselves, when we bestow on them the care required by their age and wants, and we would never be wanting in respect for them.

“O you, who are entrusted with the education of youth!” says St. John Chrysostom, “do you know how much consideration and respect you owe the child? Consult your faith, and it will tell you. On his forehead you see the seal of his divine adoption; it behooves you to prevent sin from breaking it. His head and breast bear the impression of a child of God, and you shall have to answer for it, if it is effaced. His heart is a true sanctuary of the Holy Ghost, and you are its guardian. If you carefully study his soul, you will discover in it the germ and the principle of all the virtues and it pertains to you to cause them to sprout and grow. Around this child, says our Saviour, are angels appointed to defend and protect him, and with them you share that

holy duty. Judge then, how worthy this child is of your respect and how deserving he is of your care."

But what are the obligations imposed upon us by the child's innocence?

1. Great restraint in our words, actions and deportment, so that we may not say, do, or show anything liable to scandalize him or impart to him an idea of evil.

2. Strict watchfulness to remove from him whatever may expose him to lose his precious treasure.

3. Great reserve and circumspection in our relations with him, and great modesty in our conduct towards him.

4. Profound veneration and high esteem that will induce us always to treat him kindly, politely and respectfully.

5. Unremitting watchfulness over ourselves, so that we may always give him the example of the virtues and of a uniform good conduct which he may imitate.

A certain holy priest engaged in teaching children, being asked how he managed to be always able to control himself, to keep patient, reserved and calm on all occasions, however trying, replied. "Because I never lose sight of the old saying: 'We owe great respect to the child.' Before undertaking to teach children I would often say to myself: 'God sees me.' This proved an excellent preservative from sin; and

since I began to teach, I add: 'These children see me;' and the fear of scandalizing them keeps me from all sin." But some one remarked: "The children are not always with you." "True," he answered; "but the care I take in watching over myself in their presence has grown into a habit; moreover, we can, in some manner, say of them what we say of God: 'They see me in the darkness, and hear me when I believe myself alone.' "

God has entrusted to us the child, that precious treasure, and will demand of us a strict account of our charge. What a terrible account would it be, if we were not only to neglect our duty, but were even, how horrible the thought! to scandalize the child, to lead the child into sin! "If to overthrow a building consecrated to God," says St. John Chrysostom, "is an impious sacrilege, it is a still more heinous crime to defile an innocent soul, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, because a soul is infinitely more precious than a material building, since Jesus Christ died for the soul and not for the building. To scandalize a child, to cause him to lose his innocence is a greater crime than to plunge a dagger into his heart! The latter deprives him only of the life which he shall one day lose; but the former robs him of the life of grace, which, by its nature, is immortal. The murdered child would be admitted to endless glory and bliss in heaven, but the scandal-giver delivers the child he scandalizes, both in body and

in soul, into the eternal flames of hell! You shrink from the murder of the body; how much more should you dread spiritual murder, the murder of the soul, which is so much the greater crime as the soul is more noble and excellent than the body."

"Woe to him," says our divine Saviour, "who scandalizeth one of these little ones!" "He says 'little ones,' not great ones, nor the grown up," says St. John Chrysostom, "to teach us that the souls of children are dearer to Him on account of their innocence; it is a greater crime to scandalize a little child than to scandalize a grown person, because of the child's inexperience and of the fatal results of bad example in his tender soul." "It were better," says our divine Saviour, "that a mill-stone were hung about the neck of the scandal-giver and that he be thus cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize a little one." "It would have been better," says St. Bernard, "that such a one should not have become a religious, than that he should thus disgrace his Institute; such a one should at once be sent back to the world." "The punishment with which Jesus Christ threatens the scandal-giver," says St. John Chrysostom, "is without hope of pardon; he who casts himself into the sea, may yet be able to swim ashore; but how can he be saved who is at the bottom of the sea with a mill-stone around his neck?"

"God," says St. Paul, "will destroy him who

profaneth the temple of God." But what temple is more holy and pleasing to God than the heart of an innocent child? "If, according to the law of God," says St. John Chrysostom, "he who sins must die, what will become of him who causes innocent children to sin, whom it is his duty to edify, to watch over and to train in virtue?"

A Roman lady who had in obedience to her husband, who wished to prevent his daughter from entering a convent, dressed her in a worldly fashion, was most severely punished, for during the following night an angel appeared to her, uttering terrible threats: "How did you dare to prefer the orders of your husband to those of your Saviour! How did you dare to lay your hand on a child consecrated to God! That hand shall instantly wither, so that the severity of the punishment may teach you the gravity of your fault; and if you are again guilty of such a fault, you shall see your husband and your children die, and you shall yourself be cast into hell in five months from this day." The angel's prediction was fulfilled, and her sudden death indicated that she had too long waited to do penance. "In this manner," says St. Jerome, who relates this fact, "God punishes those who profane His temple." What a horrible doom awaits him who scandalizes and leads one of his pupils astray!

A certain man had killed a child; his conscience left him no rest either by day or by night. Wherever he went, he thought he heard the child's

voice saying: "Why hast thou killed me?" This so tormented him, that he gave himself up to the law and confessed his crime. And shall not he who has led a child astray hear: "Why hast thou robbed me of my innocence and delivered my soul to the devil? Why hast thou precipitated me into hell? Woe, eternal woe to him who caused my eternal ruin!"

15. DISCIPLINE. (C)

One Thursday during a walk the Little Brothers of Mary were discussing the best means of inspiring their pupils with a love and relish for study. One Brother boasted of his success in this by means of little rewards, a picture, good notes, and the like. Another did the same by means of emulation among his pupils. A third maintained that it all depended on the teacher's ability and devotedness to his work. A fourth said that his success was owing to beautiful writing and fine drawing. Ven. Father Champagnat had listened to all in silence. After hearing the views and arguments of all, he said: "All these means are good, but insufficient; even if they were all combined together, they will be unsuccessful, unless they are upheld and strengthened by a strong and paternal discipline. Some of you do not sufficiently esteem discipline, for you do not understand its dignity and importance; some even fancy that it keeps children from attending our schools; but it is just the contrary, for daily experience shows that a school in which perfect order reigns, is liked by the pupils and their parents, because order pleases everybody, and disorder is hateful to every one. The children are

contented and find comfort in a well-disciplined school; whilst in an ill-disciplined school they suffer and have no relish for study. The lack of discipline in a school, like the predominant passion in men, is the source of all evils, the direct or indirect cause of all the faults committed. The lack of discipline compromises, or rather nullifies, all the other means of winning the children to God and attaching them to the school. Without it, I am convinced, there is no instruction or education possible. Wherefore, even the pagan Plato did not hesitate to assert that all the power and success of education are to be found in a well-ordered discipline. Let us examine its happy effects.

Discipline is the glory of an educational Institute and attracts pupils to it. As men are easily influenced by exterior things, they judge a school by its discipline. A strong discipline strikes and pleases every one, wins the esteem of the public, often makes the reputation of a school and draws pupils to it. It also secures for them progress and a solid instruction, by preserving the good morals of the children, maintaining order and silence in the school-room, by stirring up emulation and allowing no pupil to shirk the common duties, and causing all to employ the time well. A disciplined and well regulated class is always a studious class and a nursery of good students.

Discipline preserves and nourishes the piety of the children, for it watches over the performance

of their religious duties, requires them to be respectful and modest at prayer, to recite the prayers distinctly and devoutly, suppresses or prevents all conversations, words or deeds tending to weaken respect for religion and fidelity in the practices of piety. It preserves the morals of the children, and, consequently, also their health, through constant watchfulness, by never leaving them alone, by keeping them away from bad company and from sloth, and keeping them always occupied.

Discipline imparts a good spirit to the children by inspiring them with a holy respect for themselves, combats their defects and passions, imparts to them a docile spirit, confidence, mutual love and all the virtues of the family life. It keeps the children from committing faults and, therefore, from being punished. The firmer the discipline, the fewer the faults and the punishments. Teachers, who have a weak character or are too slothful to maintain order by watchfulness, by assiduity and punctuality in the observance of the rules, are those who punish the pupils the most. Discipline also trains the child's will and imparts to it the requisite energy to resist evil and combat his vicious propensities; it prepares him for the practice of virtue and for obeying the impressions of divine grace. Why is it that, in our age, the majority of men are inconstant, sensual, unable to practise self-denial and to bear anything disagreeable? Because they

were reared without discipline, without being taught to obey, to govern themselves, to combat and overcome their evil inclinations. To subject a child to a strong, but paternal discipline, to accustom him to obey, to be patient, is to do him the greatest of benefits.

Discipline preserves the teacher's health. Where discipline reigns, the pupils are attentive, and the teacher needs not repeat the same things several times, or speak very loud; he is thus able to spare his chest. Where a good discipline reigns, the order, the quiet, peace and the good spirit resulting therefrom, secure perfect tranquillity to the teacher, and thus spare him the lively emotions and moral troubles that wear out his strength and health. In a word, in such a class there is a hundred times less trouble and a hundred times more satisfaction and consolation than in one where discipline is wanting.

But how to obtain the strong and paternal discipline, which produces such good effects? The paternal and religious discipline, which alone properly trains the child's will and all his faculties, is the fruit of moral authority. There are two kinds of authority, the legal and the moral.

The legal authority is conferred by one's office. It suffices to maintain discipline among the soldiers in a camp, among sailors in a vessel, among convicts in a penitentiary, but is powerless for training Christians. That authority has three attributes; command, punishment and reward.

But in a school where there is no question of ruling children by compulsion, but of training them in virtue and subjecting them to duty through religious influence and the restraint of conscience, the legal authority is only a very secondary mode of enforcing discipline, and, if it is used without reason or prudence, if it is too severe, it irritates the children, imparts an evil spirit to them, and throws the class into disorder.

The moral authority, which really rears the child, is the influence which the teacher exercises over his pupils by his virtue, capacity, good conduct and wise government. This authority produces respect, esteem, confidence, love, gratitude, submission, the fear of displeasing and the desire of pleasing and satisfying the teacher. This authority is acquired by virtue and an exemplary conduct, and by ability and by devotion to the children's instruction. Cyrus having asked his grandfather, Artaxerxes, how he would best be able to govern his people and win their esteem and affection, received this reply: "Show yourself the most virtuous and the most able, and your people will submit to you without difficulty."

Moral authority is acquired, moreover, by reason, judgment and practical good sense. Virtue, reason and capacity bear the scepter of the world and rule everywhere, for no one refuses to submit to them. It is acquired also by gravity, modesty and reserve in the teacher's relations with his pupils; by respecting both himself and the chil-

dren; by carefully concealing his defects, faults, shortcomings and incapacity; by the moderate use of rewards and punishments; by avoiding excessive severity, by a conduct so wise and prudent, that the children never have a reason to blame the teacher, or find fault with him. Moral authority alone is capable of educating and making children good Christians and good citizens.

The moral authority is not sufficiently powerful, if it does not win for the teacher the respect, docility and affection of the children. It is necessarily weak when they are not convinced that the teacher is virtuous, capable, sensible, and has a father's heart for them. The authority is too weak, when it is not respected in those appointed to replace the teacher, or when it is not maintained in his absence.

16. SUPERVISION. (C)

1. The religious teacher is the guardian angel of his pupils.

Innocence is the first of all goods and the most excellent of all gifts. A child preserved in his baptismal innocence is, in the sight of God, a treasure more precious than all the kingdoms in the world. But this beautiful innocence is surrounded by enemies that have sworn its ruin, and the child does not know the value of that precious virtue, which he carries in a fragile vase; nor is he aware of the dangers or of the snares laid for him on every side, in order to make him fall and rob him of his treasure. And since the child is not able of himself to preserve that priceless good, God has entrusted its protection to the Catholic teacher and appointed him its guardian and defender. "I have established thee watchman over Israel" (Ezech. 3. 19), over the children thou art appointed to educate. St. John Chrysostom, explaining this passage, says: "Just as a sentinel is placed on an elevated position to observe the enemy's movements from afar, and to prevent his army from being taken by surprise, so also, in like manner, they who are appointed to teach children, are established espe-

cially to watch the manœuvres of the enemy of salvation and to remove from them the snares and dangers prepared by the devil to cause them to fall into his nets." "The teacher," says Rollin, "is the children's guardian angel, and he is responsible for them every moment that they are under his care." St. John Baptist de la Salle said to his Brothers: "It may, in some manner, be said of each one of you that he is a bishop, that is, an overseer or superintendent of the flock God has entrusted to him; he is, therefore obliged in conscience, to watch over every one of his pupils."

A religious teacher should consider himself as a general in command of a place attacked by the enemy, who takes not a moment of rest in order to prevent its capture; or as a pilot who constantly consults the compass and his charts, that he may be able to avoid the shoals and reefs on his route; or as a shepherd who dreads neither labor nor fatigue, when there is question of defending his flock from a pack of wolves, and uses every precaution to keep his sheep from straying into dangerous pastures. The religious teacher can learn a lesson also from the devil, who is ever on the watch to discover means and occasions of robbing the children of their innocence. The devil never loses sight of these tender children; he follows them everywhere, seeking a chance to surprise them. Should a religious show less zeal for their salvation than the devil does to effect their ruin? How can he be at ease, when that

roaring lion is constantly going about to devour the souls his neglect would give up to him!

2. God will demand of the teaching religious an account of the children entrusted to him.

Watchfulness is one of the principal points in the education of children. It is one of the strictest duties of the teacher, and of which the neglect is liable to have the worst results; and he who would neglect it, would deserve the severest punishments. "If the lack of watchfulness," says Rollin, "affords an occasion to the enemy of souls, who is ever on the alert in order to rob the children of the precious treasure of their innocence, what can the religious teacher answer Jesus Christ, when He demands of him an account of the souls of his pupils, and reproaches him with being less watchful to defend them, than Satan is to ruin them?" "Your pupils," says St. John Chrysostom, "are a deposit confided to you, of which you shall have to render an account to God. Therefore, watch carefully over their conduct, that you may know where they go, the company they keep, and if you fail in this duty, expect no favor from God."

3. Watchfulness is one of the principal duties of the teacher.

The spirit of watchfulness, attention and punctuality should make up the character of the teacher. "Among the virtues of a good teacher," says Rollin, "watchfulness and attention hold the first rank; he cannot carry these too far, provided

it be without constraint or affectation." He should watch not only in the class-room; his eye and attention should follow them everywhere, indoors, outdoors, in school, at recreation, in the street, in the church. A good teacher's watchfulness never sleeps, and, in order to prevent the enemy of souls from robbing them of the priceless treasure of their innocence, it follows them always and everywhere. It was whilst the servants were asleep that the enemy sowed cockle in the field in order to choke the good seed; Delila betrayed Samson, when he was asleep, into the hands of the Philistines; when the shepherd is asleep the wolves rejoice; in like manner, Satan going about seeking to devour the virtue and innocence of the children, is ready to pounce upon the children when their guardian is asleep, neglecting to watch over their safety. The child is credulous, trusting, impressible, complacent and easily seduced, and, therefore, needs to be always followed and directed. The children should be watched during recreation, lest they become the victims of dangerous and sinful friendships. The teacher's watchfulness should extend to all the pupils, to all their senses and actions, so as to remove the thought of evil by making evil impossible. "Thou shalt take care," said our divine Saviour to St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, "as far as thou canst and according to the grace I give thee, to have as many eyes as there are souls entrusted to thee." This admonition is applicable to teaching religious.

4. The morals of the children cannot be preserved without such active watchfulness.

“Youth,” says St. John Chrysostom, “is passionate; wherefore we cannot too greatly protect them against their impetuosity, nor too greatly multiply our precautions, supports and supervision. If you wish to preserve them in their innocence, be not sparing of admonitions, reproofs, nor of any proper means your authority affords you. However good their qualities, however favorable their dispositions, watch constantly over them; never allow them to be masters of their actions; watch even over their thoughts, for you shall not otherwise keep them pure. “Give him not liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices” (Eccli. 30.11). The most exquisite wine, in fact, turns into vinegar, if not properly cared for; the most excellent fruit tree degenerates, if not properly cleaned, pruned, cultivated. The finest flock deteriorates, if the shepherd is not constantly watchful. Without your assiduous watchfulness and care, you cannot expect to preserve innocence in the heart of a child, that virtue which is so precious, so delicate, so important not only for his eternal, but even for his temporal happiness, so necessary for his progress in piety, in study, for his very health and life. Without your assiduous watchfulness the child will acquire the science of evil without your being aware of it; that science which, like a pestilential vapor from hell, burns and devours the flower of purity when

it begins to bud forth; that science, which corrupts and degrades the best natures; that science which causes the child to contract deplorable habits, which he may not be able to extirpate; that science which in the earliest youth leads later on to all the excesses of debauchery, to infirm old age and a shameful death. And what is sufficient to ruin the child's beautiful innocence and draw down so many misfortunes upon him? A single moment of the neglect of watchfulness! Only one spark is needed to set on fire the child's heart; which is full of combustibles! An unguarded look led David into adultery and murder. A single conversation, an inconsiderate step, a short reading out of curiosity, a suspicious friendship, a short absence of the teacher from the class-room or from the recreation, during which the children are left without supervision, each of these is often the first and chief cause of the ruin of innocent children!

5. How should this watchfulness be exercised?

The principal object of watchfulness is to remove or keep away from the child everything that might prove injurious to his education, to prevent his faults by removing their occasions, to prevent the fire of his passions from being kindled by cutting off their nourishment, to close his mind against evil thoughts by keeping out of his way whatever may give rise to them. The chief objects of watchfulness are the following.

1. Connections or friendships. "Evil connec-

tions," says Cardinal de la Luzerne, "are the most natural principle and the most common cause of corruption." Too intimate a friendship, a friendship between two children, especially if one is older than the other, and neither of them is very virtuous and regular; their affection to get always together, to remain always together, especially in out-of-the-way places, out of the sight of the teacher; the way they converse together, their mutual smiles, gestures and winks, and a certain want of modesty, are all indications that there may be something wrong between them. In such a case, without manifesting our thoughts or suspicions, we must admonish them not to be so familiar with each other and to be more modest. The manner in which they receive this admonition and act after receiving it, will help us to discover what they have in their hearts. Whatever this may be, our watchfulness over them must not be relaxed. To prevent such connections or friendship, we should often cause our pupils to change places in the school-room and *elsewhere*, under various pretexts, or plausible reasons.

2. Deportment or attitude. A child's deportment indicates what he is. A child often surprised in an unbecoming posture, especially if he blushes, if he at once sets himself to work at his task, should be reproved and closely watched. The children should be trained in proper deportment, in good and polite manners, and be instructed in and accustomed to the rules of mod-

esty. They should stand straight in class; when seated keep their hands *on* their desks and their feet close together, they should always be decently clothed in recreation and on their walks, keep their hands out of their pockets. Everything unbecoming in behavior, every sign of passion should be repressed and even punished.

3. The bad pupils. Contagious diseases are easily communicated by contact. One bad pupil, like a corrupt leaven, can spoil a whole class, a whole school. How many innocent children have been corrupted by bad companions! An incorrigible pupil must by all means be expelled from school!

4. Conversations, tastes, inclinations. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," says our divine Saviour. Every unbecoming, or double-meaning word should be rigorously punished. Hence special attention should be given to the children's conversations. The children who are inclined to effeminacy, to frivolous or dangerous reading, to intemperance, to excessive anger, must be closely watched, also the foppish, those having too great care of their hair; there is reason to suspect their morals, or to fear that they are about to suffer shipwreck. The children not noted for love of prayer, who keep apart from the others, and are not fond of play and have a sly, cunning look, whisper often to others, and keep out of the teacher's sight or hearing, are usually corrupt, and need close watching.

5. Whatever may endanger their morals. Precaution alone can preserve the flower of innocence; whatever is injurious to it, should be put out of the way. Flight is the best means of avoiding impurity. Therefore, we should keep from the minds of children whatever may beget an impure thought, or make an impression on the passions. So watch as to know what your pupils do, say, love and wish for. Examine from time to time their desks and all that belongs to them, and all the secret nooks and corners; punish those who have anything unbecoming in their possession; and if they relapse into the same fault, expel them. Do not let them go out walking where they may see or hear what may prove dangerous to their morals.

6. Watch over yourself. Be very reserved in your words and modest in your actions, gestures and demeanor. Be edifying in all you do, give the example of every virtue. Be punctual in entering the school, in being *always pleasant during the recreation of the pupils* and unremitting in watching over them, so as to prevent altogether the entrance of vice among them. How many children have gone to destruction through the neglect of this most important duty, which is incumbent on every religious teacher!—Watch quietly, without worry, excitement or affectation; be not unduly suspicious, but be simple and easy, so that the children may not be aware that they are watched, but may think the teacher is with them to keep

them company, and be of assistance to them. Watch so, that the children may not become hypocrites, and being under the impression that they are not trusted, have recourse to slyness and deceit, and thus become hypocrites.

17. WHAT A TEACHER SHOULD BE. (C)

Every man occupies a place in society and has a task to perform, a service to render to society. All this is honorable, because it is all useful and concurs in the general good. There are, however, certain social functions more worthy, more exalted than others. Some benefit the body, others benefit the soul; and as much as the soul is more noble than the body, so much is the service or ministry of souls superior to that which has only the body for its object. Thence it follows that the priest and the teacher who are occupied with the souls of men, fill the most exalted offices or ministries among men.

Education is so noble a work, that the Fathers of the Church and other weighty authors call it a magistracy, a paternity, and apostolate. "This magistracy," says St. John Chrysostom, "is so far above civil magistracy, as heaven is above the earth; and even this is saying too little. The civil magistracy offers no teaching in true wisdom; it does not tell us what the soul is, what the world is, or what shall become of us after the present life, whither we shall go after leaving this world, or how we can practise virtue. The magistracy of the teacher, on the contrary, teaches

all these great things; hence it is called a school of religion, a chair for the instruction of souls, a tribunal where the soul judges herself, a gymnasium in which are trained all who enter the race for heaven."

Magistrates judge the accused and condemn those guilty of public crimes, but they do not enlighten, do not follow up to the inmost conscience the first thought, the first temptation of vice. This is the teacher's task. The magistrate punishes evil; the teacher does better by preventing it, by stifling it in its birth, in its very germ. The magistrate punishes without usually reforming the culprit, the worthy teacher usually reforms without punishing him, for after the evil has been committed, he seeks not the culprit's death, but the destruction of his guilt. If society owes a debt of gratitude to the magistrate who frees it from criminals, how grateful should it not be to the teacher for training good and virtuous citizens who will one day be its honor and glory! Therefore Mgr. Dupanloup concludes that "the teacher is also a magistrate, and his magistracy and his work hold the first rank in society."

The teacher is also a father. He is a second father, whose vocation, though not above that of the first or natural father, inspires him with a devotedness perhaps more generous because it is more free and disinterested; and often his aptitude and ability are greater and more perfect than those of the natural father. The teacher essen-

tially participates in what is most noble in the Divine Paternity, and is fitted to receive a participation of its power; hence he may be called, as Holy Writ calls God "the father of souls." This great name suits him well. Even the pagans admitted this. "Let the young know," says one of their philosophers, "that their teachers are the fathers, not of their bodies, but of their souls." Alexander the Great acknowledged that he owed not less to Aristotle, his teacher, than to King Philip, his father, for if he owed his life to the latter, he owed the honorableness of his life to his teacher.

In the idea of the Church education is an apostolate, a kind of priesthood. "I fear not to assert," says Mgr. Dupanloup, "that the most holy and zealous priest often exerts an influence less diffused and less profound than the teacher does on the souls and destiny of his pupils. The presence of the priest among the children is more rare, and his conversations with them take place only at longer or shorter intervals, and he cannot follow them in all their actions. But it is quite different with the teacher; he holds in his hands, so to say, the whole existence of the children every day, every hour, and together with this their present and their future. His intercourse with them is more frequent, more intimate, more natural; his influence with them is, then, is always living, always present, and therefore constant and universal. The confessor repairs the evil and does immense and admirable benefit to

their souls, but he contributes but little in directly developing their faculties, and but seldom in forming their character, and in correcting their defects in their minutest details. The teacher determines the employment of the time of the children, actively works in developing their faculties, in helping them to acquire knowledge and correcting their notions and sentiments. He is always with them, watches over them, directs their actions. They think chiefly of him, hear him only, work for him only, depend wholly on him in all that is closely connected with their mind and heart, that is, blame or praise, shame or honor, the pleasure of learning, working and succeeding.

The teacher's influence over the children is, therefore, immense both by training their faculties, and by contributing to form their characters and morals by means of discipline in the daily exercises. The teacher, by his watchfulness, finds out their defects, points them out to them, and usually knows them better than the children themselves and even their confessor, who remits their sins, counsels them certain acts of virtue and encourages them. The teacher goes further; he knows thoroughly the good qualities and the faults of his pupils, endeavors on the spot to extirpate the latter and develop the former. The confessor endowed with the highest of authorities, forms the conscience of the children; the teacher does likewise, although with a less exalted, but

more influential, authority. The confessor heals the wounds of the soul, draws graces from heaven upon them, and imparts supernatural life to them. The teacher prepares his pupils' strong and lively faculties for the spiritual supernatural life, inspires them with love for the beautiful and the true, forms in them a clear, pure and upright mind for the truths of faith, an energetic will, a generous, grateful and filial heart, a strong and firm character for the combats and practice of virtue.

Therefore, education is not a speculative work, a mere trade, but a real apostolate seeking souls to win them to God. In speculation, or theory, the teacher is only a schoolmaster working at his trade, or profession. In the apostolate the teacher is a father, a pastor fulfilling a *sacred* ministry, a man of God devoting and forgetting himself to save souls. In theory teaching is a means of gain, of earning a living; in the apostolate the pupils are children, whom we love and rear for God, and for whom we sacrifice our cares, our health and even our life. The apostolate is paternal care, paternal devotedness, apostolic zeal. In the schools directed by the apostolate, education is the family, a family that is all Christian. Therein God is present, therein rules the paternal authority of God in the highest degree, therein is the care and solicitude of souls; the first object therein is to train and win souls for God.

It is, therefore, evident that the ministry of the Catholic (religious) teacher is most noble, exalted

and difficult. In fact, it is not easy to impart a good and virtuous education, but, says Cardinal de la Luzerne, "it requires the long and assiduous cares of a great wisdom." It is not enough merely to cast seeds of virtue into the soul; they must be carefully, constantly and intelligently cultivated, until the fruits have been gathered. It is not enough to teach religious principles, but they must be so deeply impressed, as to be inef-faceable. It is not enough to make religion known, but the pupils must be filled with its love. It is not enough to fortify weak nature, but it is requisite to reform nature inclined to evil.

What a combination of qualities, apparently incompatible with one another, are required for so great a work! An authority which allows the freedom necessary to develop the character, and yet refuses the freedom that might spoil it! A meekness excluding weakness, a severity without harshness, a complacency and a kindness without familiarity; an ardent desire of success tempered by a patience that is proof against all discouragement and opposition; a watchfulness which nothing escapes, and a wisdom appearing not to know, not to notice; a reserve not hurtful to frankness; a firmness devoid of obstinacy; a sagacity in discovering inclinations without allowing itself to be perceived; a prudence indicating what it behooves to be excused and what should be punished, and enabling the teacher to seize the favorable moment for so doing; a skill that never

degenerates into cunning, and insinuates itself into the mind without startling it; a pleasant way which renders the instructions pleasing without depriving them of solidity; an indulgence that wins the affection, joined to an exactitude and a justice that inspires fear; a condescension adapting itself to inclinations without favoring them; a skill in causing one inclination to be combated or overcome by another, in fortifying those that are good and in weakening those that are evil; a foresight in warding off dangerous occasions; a presence of mind that is never disconcerted by captious questions; I have almost said: A good teacher should be a perfect man." Although it is not given to all teachers to possess all these good qualities, all should, nevertheless, endeavor to acquire solid virtue, fervent piety, real, sincere love for children, perfect devotedness, a constant, firm and watchful zeal to preserve them in their innocence and to correct their defects.

A solid virtue. Of all the lessons a teacher can and should give his pupils, the first, the principal, the most meritorious for himself, the most efficacious for them, is his good example. Instruction penetrates more easily and is more deeply engraved through the eyes than through the ears. Discourses may convince, but example draws; its power, so much the stronger as it is the sweeter, combines and presents under one aspect instruction, exhortation, encouragement. The child is naturally an imitator of what he sees, for God

made him so, that he might instruct himself by the language of facts. Students of calligraphy and drawing instruct themselves by copying the works of others. "In all things," says St. Paul, "show thyself an example of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity, the sound word that cannot be blamed, that he, who is on the contrary part, may be afraid, having no evil to say of us" (Tit. 2. 7, 8).

Moreover, education is the transmission of moral life, for it is a real paternity. It is an essential law of life that it is transmissible only under certain conditions of identity or resemblance. In the physical world beings are reproduced, each in its own species; by imparting life they impart their own conformation, wants and aptitudes. And, save exceptions, the moral life is transmitted under the same conditions of similarity. But, as no one gives what he has not, the parents and the teachers can transmit only what they have. Therefore the teachers should possess the moral life, or virtue, in its fulness, without any mixture of infirmities or defilement; otherwise they could impart it only altered or incomplete. As there are hereditary diseases, deficiencies or excesses, so also there result from education moral vigor, or certain depraved germs thereof. Wherefore moral life and virtue are transmitted in their existing conditions, powerful or weak, according as the education is weak or firm in virtue. Hence, as the father, so the son;

as the teacher, so the pupil. This is the law; exceptions do not destroy or weaken it.

The Creator Himself wished, in some manner, to formulate this law of paternity when He said: "Let us make man after our own image and likeness." Then he breathed into man a living soul. The great paternity of education is exercised in like manner. The educator has to draw from his very soul correct ideas, good, noble and virtuous sentiments, all of which are the constituents of the moral life. If these exist only in his words and are not manifested in his habits, in his conduct, his teaching will amount only to vain sounds, will be a mere dead letter, and not the living principle begetting life or the virtue producing virtue. If instead of the moral life, his heart contains only the elements of death, vice, sin, indifference, covetousness worldliness, the child cannot but undergo its evil influence, and, unless specially preserved by grace, his soul will be more or less stamped with his teacher's evil image, or influence. The moral life insinuates itself like a breath, is breathed like air; it escapes from the souls breathing it by secret emanations as perfume escapes from a flower. It is, in short, a word, a look, a smile, an attitude; it is especially the multiple collection of relations, habits and language that serves as the issues of life and ways of communicating itself to souls. In the moral order death proceeds in the same manner as life; it is not always the result of some fatal blow that can be

seen and indicated; it glides into the souls invisibly and penetrates them, because it also escapes therefrom by fatal exhalations through the same channels that enable life to enter. Hence we say: "The contagions of vice," as we say also: "The good odor of virtue."

In order to teach, or rather to inspire virtue, we must be virtuous, otherwise we are professional quacks and deceivers; and this is the lowest of degradations. Wherefore Mgr. Borderie, Bishop of Versailles, said once to a young priest: "He who is entrusted with the education of youth, will become a saint, if he is not a hypocrite or a deceiver, for then he will surely practise what he teaches and inculcates on his pupils. You exhort them to be very pure and irreproachable, to love truth, to practise obedience, to be pious; if you are not a hypocrite or a deceiver, you yourself will practise all these virtues and sanctify yourself thereby. To give lessons of wisdom to your pupils, and to contradict by your evil example the principles you lay down for them, would be a shame and a crime; would be caressing with one hand and striking with the other. Your words and your actions should agree with one another. All your words of wisdom will not avail with the children, if your conduct differs from them, and will serve only to your own condemnation."

A fervent piety. Let us always bear in mind that God occupies the first place in education.

1. In the first place, because He is man's first

teacher. He, before all, devotes Himself to man's education; He is essentially a teacher: "Men shall all be taught of God" (Is. 54. 13). He is our first teacher with regard to *thought*, *conscience* and *speech*; their origin is from God; no other can be reasonably assigned. God does not visibly educate. The external work of education is entrusted to man. Paul plants, Apollo waters; men do what they can; but they can effect nothing of themselves; the only one who really counts in man's education is "He that giveth the increase," develops, fortifies, enlightens, exalts, that is God! "God," as Fénelon says, "works invisibly, like a miner in the interior of the earth; and, although we do not see God or attribute anything to Him, He, however, does all. He acts in our inmost soul without ceasing, just as He does in cultivated fields, to enable them to produce fruits; were He to omit His action, all human labor would not avail."

Wherefore the teacher is only God's co-operator in the work of education. But to be a fit co-operator, he must evidently be closely united to Him and participate abundantly in His spirit; but it is only through piety and frequent communings with God that this can be effected. Moreover, the first means of success in education is grace, that is, the gift of teaching. But "every perfect gift cometh from above, from the Father of lights." Without divine assistance the most assiduous and difficult labors are without result; but with it the

least efforts are crowned with success. Fervent piety alone can obtain the divine assistance, this grace, this gift of teaching, without which nothing can be effected. If the teacher is not pious, he is unfit to teach and will never succeed. He may teach the usual branches of profane learning and cause the children to memorize the catechism, but he will never inspire them to be virtuous or train their souls.

2. Secondly, because the children should be cared for God. "To rear them only for a natural life," says Cardinal de la Luzerne, "irrational animals suffice. To rear them for a mere social life, pagans are able to do it; but to rear them for God, for the Church, for heaven, this can be done only by the priest, the Christian parent and the deeply pious teacher. Education is an interior work; it is the education of souls; hence the educator is bound to occupy himself with the souls of his pupils, in order to raise them to God; with their minds to enlighten them, to impart to them solid religious principles and the knowledge of Jesus Christ; with their hearts to ennoble them, to train them in virtue; with their wills, to impart to them strength, energy, to make them docile, pliant and constant; with their consciences to enlighten and form them and inspire them with horror of sin; with all their moral faculties, to develop and fit them to rise to the supernatural order, that is, to the practice of the solid Christian virtues. When

a pupil is entrusted to you, imagine our divine Saviour saying to you what Pharaoh's daughter said concerning the babe Moses she had rescued from the waters of the Nile: "Take this child and care for him for me and I will reward thee" (Exod. 2. 9); he is what I have most precious on earth; I entrust him to thee, that thou mayst preserve him from evil and teach him to do good. That child is the price of My blood; teach him what his soul has cost Me, and what I have done to save him; bring him up for heaven, for he was made to reign there with Me." It is evident that such a work cannot be carried out by mere human means, divine grace and virtue alone can do so, and they can be obtained only through prayer.

3. Thirdly, because the child is in absolute need of God's help to co-operate in his own education. Piety is what the child needs, in the first place, for his education. He needs it to sustain his weakness and to struggle against evil, evil inclinations, the temptations of the devil, human respect, the pernicious examples of his companions. If piety is wanting to him, he will be exceedingly weak on these occasions. On the other hand, the virtues cannot be acquired without efforts; defects are not corrected without resolute combats against his own perverse inclinations. He can be helped and encouraged, but, in the end, it pertains to him to extirpate the evil, to cultivate the good, to reform his faults and failings, to

develop his good qualities. But all this is impossible to him, if he has no piety. Piety renders his duties sweet and light, fortifies and animates in him and furnishes him with the requisite sap, vigor and beauty for his virtues. What a child performs merely through fear, strict duty and reason is always wearisome, hard, difficult, and sometimes overwhelming, whilst all is agreeable, sweet and easy for the child whose actions proceed from piety and the love of God.

The child who is devoid of piety, although he may be diligent and regular, is hard to bring up, to instruct; he easily grows tired, discouraged, disgusted; he mistrusts his teachers; he cannot bear reverse or disappointment; he is sensitive, inconstant, unable to choose anything great or to settle down. The pious child, indeed, is not without defects; but he knows and regrets them and endeavors to correct them; if he falls, he rises without getting vexed or concealing his faults. Piety imparts to him a wonderful strength and firmness. Sometimes children between twelve and fifteen years of age possess an astonishing maturity of character, reason and mental vigor; they are sedulous, foreseeing, moderate, upright, firm against themselves; they are the best companions and students, simple, amiable, devoid of haughtiness and harshness. Piety makes them all to all, uplifts their mind, enlarges their heart, develops all their faculties, so that St. Bernardine's saying is applicable to them: "Piety daily develops

in their features the beauty of their soul in ineffaceable grace."

4. Fourthly, because it is only with God's assistance, that the teacher befittingly acquits himself of his ministry. How can he inspire piety to his pupils, if he has none himself? How can he make known to them the excellence, necessity and benefits of prayer, if he is ignorant thereof and devoid of piety? He may teach prayer mechanically, or like a lesson in arithmetic, but it will be without fruit for his pupils. It sometimes happens that a pupil, after attending a Catholic school for six or more years, possesses but little Christian faith and piety, and this even without his teacher being aware of it. How can this happen? Because his acts were not inspired by his conscience, but were performed through imitation or force of habit; he did merely as he saw others do; and when he ceased assisting at the pious exercises of the school, he also ceased to perform them. The voice of his conscience does not supply the sign of the bell, nor his personal will the direction of his teacher. He gives up prayer, assisting at holy Mass, receiving the sacraments, and soon yielding to the current of evil example around him, he falls into sin, and unresistingly follows the impulse and cravings of his passions. Such are the results of the education given by a teacher who is wanting in piety and virtue, for he does not and cannot impart what he does not possess. He did not earnestly exert himself to engrave deeply

good principles in his pupil's mind, or to form his conscience properly, nor to make him understand the necessity and excellence of prayer; hence we need not be astonished that the fruits of his pupil's education are wanting.

One of the most important means of inspiring piety is the proper performance of the spiritual exercises. The children should learn to recite and answer the prayers respectfully, pronouncing each word, each syllable distinctly, in a simple, natural and recollected tone of voice. Nothing is more unbecoming than prayers recited hurriedly, irreverently, drily, without unison, in an attitude denoting that those who say them, do it because they must, but do not like it, and that their heart is not in them. A religious teacher who does not give to the exercises of piety all their importance, who neglects the precautions necessary to cause his pupils to pray in a reverential and becoming manner, who does not give good example at prayer, who is not grave and modest in his deportment, or who is occupied with other matters during these holy exercises, is grievously guilty, for he ruins the sentiments of piety in the hearts of his pupils, and endangers the whole work of their education. It behooves the teacher to love prayer and possess a solid piety, so that he may teach his pupils to pray, to pray well, to pray daily. The teacher who does not love prayer, who knows not how to inspire the love of prayer to his pupils, is wholly unfit for his noble mission.

A GREAT LOVE FOR HIS OFFICE AND FOR HIS PUPILS

To succeed in the noble ministry of teacher, we must love our office, and love our pupils. We must devote our whole being, our mind, our heart, our whole energy, our whole life to its duties. We must, as it were, divide or weaken ourselves. All the affections and solicitude of the teacher should be for his pupils. If he considers teaching as a mere trade, a make-shift, if he does not love his work and his pupils, if he does not wholly devote himself to their education, he does no real good. Education is neither discipline nor instruction (teaching); it does not consist in giving a civil or religious course, but in the daily and continual relations of the pupils with their teacher, in his personal directions, in his personal observance of details, encouragement, reproofs and various lessons suggested by these uninterrupted relations. But in order to cultivate one by one these young souls with the assiduity their wants and their weakness require, the teacher must love his pupils. He who loves them does more for them, and does it with greater ease and success; and why? Because the words and actions that are inspired by real affection are endowed with a special penetrating and irresistible power. The teacher who really loves his pupils can effectually admonish and counsel, for his love animates his words and imparts to them more grace and strength and they penetrate more deeply. His

admonitions are accepted as testimonies of friendship and followed with docility. He can also, when necessary, more beneficially reprove and punish, for in doing so he is never charged with prejudice or undue severity. Hence the pupil is more grieved for having displeased his teacher who loves him, than for the punishment received.

Therefore, love your pupils. Combat without ceasing the indifference, weariness and disgust you so easily feel on account of their faults. Without closing your eyes to their shortcomings, since you must correct them, nor to their faults, which it behooves you to punish, think also on all their amiable qualities which are worthy of your interest; consider the innocence depicted on their countenance, on their serene brow, the naïvety of their avowals, the sincerity of their repentance, though but little durable, the frankness of their resolutions though so soon broken, the generosity of their efforts, though seldom lasting. Give them credit for all the good they do and for all the evil they do not do; in fine, whatever they do, continue to love them as long as they are with you, since this is the only way to labor with fruit at their reformation. Love them all equally; have no pets; dislike none; or rather act so, that each one may consider himself a favorite of yours on account of your testimonies of affection for each one individually. Who has entrusted these children to you? God and their families. God is all love for men, and whoever governs in His name must

imitate His Providence and share His love. The parents of the children; but do you not know that the heart of a father, of a mother is an inexhaustible furnace of love? Hence in the name of God and of their parents love these children, and then, and *then only* will you be worthy and capable of educating them.

DEVOTEDNESS.

What is devotedness? The fruit of love. To devote oneself is to give oneself unreservedly, to forget oneself, to consider oneself as nothing, to sacrifice oneself entirely and, as St. Paul says, "after giving all, to give yourself." "Be a father; but this is not enough; be a mother," says Fénelon, "this says all." St. Paul said before: "We are not pedagogues; we are fathers. I have been among you as a father, speaking tenderly to you, as to my children." "There is not a moment," says Rollin, "when the teacher is not responsible for the souls of the children entrusted to him." If his absence or want of attention gives occasion to the enemy to rob them of the precious treasure of their innocence, what answer will he give to Jesus Christ demanding of him an account of their souls? Wherefore it behooves him never to lose sight of them. But is not this constant watchfulness the same as devotedness? In fact, only a fatherly devotedness is capable of performing such a task. The teacher whose heart lacks the inspiration of such a devotedness, will unavoid-

ably fail to accomplish his mission. For instance, what will induce a teacher to take care of the weak as well as of the strong, to bestow on the former greater pains especially because of their weakness, and so to act that, without keeping back the talented, he does not leave behind the naturally dull, who give so little natural satisfaction to his self-love? Only a paternal devotedness, for only a loving parent never leaves his offspring behind, but adapts himself to their weakness, waits for them whenever necessary, and does not sacrifice some for others, but says with Jacob: "I cannot proceed so fast, for I have little children with me." Devotedness alone can patiently bear the weaknesses, the natural and repulsive defects, the ingratitude of the children. Devotedness alone will, in the end, cause itself to be loved, for it alone attracts and raises the children to itself, because it alone lowers itself to them; and finally, it alone transforms them, because it alone identifies itself with these young souls, as a father and a mother do. In a word, it alone is capable of performing well the work of education. Devotedness is the most clear-sighted and penetrating teacher; its ability cannot be surpassed.

But we devote ourselves only because we love; love is, therefore, the principle of all devotedness. When the Son of God undertook to teach mankind, He devoted Himself to the task of raising us back to the height of our first destiny. Love was the supreme inspirer of His infinite devotedness, and

therefore St. Paul tells us, that the charity of God appeared and manifested itself in all its splendor. When Jesus appointed St. Peter to continue His work, He thrice asked him for a testimony of his love and devotedness, that we might be able to understand that, in order to discharge the beautiful and laborious ministry of education, we must, before all, love God and souls. To undertake to bring up children without loving them, to discharge this ministry with negligence and disgust is a great misfortune, a fearful responsibility. "If," says Plato, "a shoemaker is or becomes through his fault a poor workman, or claims to be a shoemaker without being one, the state will not suffer much damage, for only a few Athenians will be poorly shod; but if the teachers of youth perform their duties poorly, the consequences are entirely different, for their bad or poor work turns out ignorant and vicious generations who will endanger the prosperity and even the very existence of the state."

Love and devotedness require both salt and life to prove useful to the children. In what does the salt consist? It is the wise firmness that preserves from moral weakness and fatal indulgence. Firmness is the moral strength, the strength of mind and character with which a teacher exercises the rights of authority. It is strength of mind, firmness in counsel and thought without indecision. Reflection is, indeed, necessary; but after due reflection we should, without wavering,

know and do what we intend. It is the power of the will, that is, of something settled and determined upon, of something moderate, but immutable in its moderation. Such is the firmness that inspires respect, submission and confidence. Moral force acts on the children and educates them. Material force is compulsion; but it fails to correct vice and evil propensities; it is good enough for a penitentiary, but not for a school.

Firmness is necessary to secure progress and to cause both teachers and pupils to perform their tasks; also to maintain silence, order and recollection, without which there is no serious work, no constant application; to keep the rule, the whole rule, but nothing else than the rule and the defined regulations for each duty; never to permit or tolerate the least evil, the least fault. We may and sometimes ought to forgive, or seem not to notice; but we may never approve or tolerate what is contrary to order, for never should the principles of virtue and justice be compelled to yield.

But, as Bossuet observes, there is a false firmness, which is nothing else than harshness, stiffness, stubbornness, the power of commanding pushed to extremes. Never to have patience, always to insist on being obeyed at any cost, never to know how to wait or temporize, to force or break everything at once is usually to injure and endanger one's authority; it is a proof of *weakness*, for he who acts in this wise is not master of

himself, cannot control his feelings, and is, therefore, weak indeed. We have no real power, if we are not, first of all, masters of ourselves; our firmness can bear no fruit, if we are not, before all, firm against our own passions. Hence it behooves us, in the work of education, never to act from impulse, from feeling, violence or irritation, but always according to reason, conscience, with reflection and, in certain cases, after seeking counsel. Such is true firmness, and such is in the teacher the source and foundation of his authority. He who possesses firmness over himself deserves to exercise it over others. He is not strong who is not master of his own heart, for he is weak from the start. In a word, the firmness which is not directed and regulated by sound reason and upright judgment, is not a virtue, but a passion, or a sally of feeling or ill-humor. The firmness which is not based on kindness, is counterfeit; the firmness which does not originate from devotedness is not worthy of the name, and, especially in the work of education, has deplorable effects.

CONSTANT ZEAL to enlighten, correct and train the child in all patience.

“Three things are requisite,” says Plutarch, “to enable the soil to produce an abundant harvest: good cultivation, good laborers, good seed.” The soil is the child, the teacher is the laborer or cultivator, and the seed are the good principles, to be imparted to the child. Hence it behooves

the teacher to impress strongly on the minds of the pupils the sacred truths of religion, and to engrave deeply the divine commandments in their hearts. The teacher's lessons or instructions will soon be forgotten and lost, if they are not often repeated; to be lasting, they must be frequently given. I say *frequently*, but not that they should last a long time. The attention of children is too flighty to remain fixed for a long time on one point. Do not weary them with your lessons; they are plants which thrive better on the morning dew than on heavy and protracted rains far apart. The most tender age is the most favorable for easily engraving in the memory the lessons and principles of faith; it is the time when the Christian virtues strike the understanding most vividly, and the unction of piety most powerfully moves the heart. The image of God is easily impressed on soft wax; but to engrave it on stone there is need of the hammer and the chisel. When there are as yet no prejudices to dispel, no passions to repress, no habits to reform, it is much easier to work on the soul and train it in the holy duties of the Christian. Look at the skilful gardener; he takes a young tree, which is still straight, and attaches it to a support to keep it from getting crooked. The potter works his clay when it is still soft. In like manner, it is whilst the child is still young that he must be trained in good principles. If he is left to wallow in ignorance and vice, it will afterwards be too late, as the Holy

Ghost tells us, to subject him to the law of God and to train him in virtue.

Just as plants, flowers and fruit are contained in small seeds, so also do the germs of virtues and vices exist already in little children. All the merits of education consist in cultivating the former and extirpating the latter. The good educator does not restrict his labors to eliminating the disorders which disturb discipline, or the individual faults which wound the conscience of his pupils; but he endeavors, moreover, to correct their defects. Defects, every one knows, are the roots of faults; they are shoots which always grow again, so long as the root has not been entirely removed. "A young man," says Plato, "acquires perfection by struggling against his interior propensities, and against his defects by repressing them." Without these combats there is not even an incipient virtue.

Education is a kind of cultivation. A good cultivation comprises two things. The first consists in cutting off useless branches and the bad fruits of the plant. This is an image of the repression and retrenchment of the disorders and faults; this is good and useful, but is not sufficient. The second part consists in depriving the plant of wild sap and grafting on the wild plant a shoot from a good plant. This grafting is a symbol of the virtues to be inspired to the child and sown, as it were, in his heart. The Catholic educator, however, should bear in mind that defects

are hardly corrigible except in the young, for St. Paul tells us that "we reap only what we have sown." When at last, wisdom comes, man, whilst deploring them, still commits faults which are the unhappy consequences of early ones. "When men," says Fénelon, "wish to give up their evil ways, the evil ways still follow them a long time, for there remain to them their evil habits, a weakened nature, and they no longer have any suppleness, and are almost without natural resources against their defects." Like trees, whose rude and knotty trunk has grown hard for many years, and can no longer be straightened, men, at a certain age, can no longer bend themselves straight against certain habits, which have grown old with them and have penetrated them to the very marrow of their bones. Often they know them but too late; they then bewail them, but in vain. Youth is the only time when a man has full power to correct himself.

A truth, which we should acknowledge and never lose sight of, is that our defects are the sources of all our misfortunes, sorrows, weaknesses, going astray, deceptions and of the great troubles in our life. These are very powerful motives to induce a zealous teacher to labor untiringly to correct and extirpate the defects of his pupils. In men of all states and conditions, all superiorities and all inferiorities, all happiness and all unhappiness of life are decided by their good qualities or their defects. If So and So had known that he had a

certain defect, or had not fostered it, if his teacher had helped him to correct it, he would have been an honor and a source of happiness to his family, which he now disgraces!

Suppose that in a certain family there reigns the very common defect of the *spirit of contradiction*; if it regards trifles, it banishes domestic peace and happiness; if it concerns matters of importance, it will lead to scandalous dissensions. If a business man has the defect of sloth, or that of a lack of order, and his business is extensive, he will become bankrupt sooner or later. If education does not correct that proud and vain child, he will always be a torment to his family by his haughty pretensions, his whims, his tyranny. If education does not reform that indocile child, who already has such free and independent ways, who despises the authority of his parents and teacher, when grown up he will revolt against the laws of society, preach and practise disorder and anarchy. Another child has an evident propensity to lust; if you do not watch him closely, but let him tranquilly abandon himself to his inordinate inclinations, he will, in a short time, ruin both his body and his soul, and, by his bad example, cause the ruin of others. God and human society will, one day, demand of the teacher an account of his efforts to correct such vices and to train his pupils in virtue.

Another point deserving our attention is that little defects diminish and unmake great charac-

ters, great men. We should never flatter or neglect a single defect, however weak or light it may appear, for every such defect grows and increases in secret until it becomes prominent, and even predominant. Since man's original fault there is in each one no evil germ, however small or unperceived, which, if not combated, does not tend to take full possession of him, to domineer over him and to corrupt everything in him. On the other hand, there is not a good thing in us which will not grow weak, unless it is supported and strengthened. Hence we should never neglect cultivating a good quality, for a virtue, a grace, however great, will perish, if neglected. In nature all that grows happily, all that rises gracefully in the age of vigor, had to suffer, in its infancy, subjection and restraint. A young tree needs to be propped, cut, pruned, etc., in order to have a pleasing form, in order to bear fine fruit; hence all this propping, cutting and pruning proves beneficial to its welfare.

But there is need of much discernment for repressing and correcting defects, lest severity should degenerate into harshness, and kindness into weakness. Either excess is apt to ruin the work of education. Corrections that are either too severe or too lenient, produce no good effect. Iron is rendered malleable by blows, but ill-directed blows break it. He who knows not how to grade reproofs and punishments, accustoms the children to the former and hardens them against

the latter. He embitters their minds, and whilst endeavoring to correct them of one defect, he only imparts a greater one to them. Prudence proportions admonitions and punishments to the character of the child; it breaks the hardness of some by severe punishments, and fears to crush others by dealing vigorously with them. It does not treat those who are naturally inclined to good, as it does those who are naturally inclined to vice, and varies the kind and rigor of the punishment according to the defects and faults.

Inexperienced teachers who are always punishing and multiplying and aggravating punishments without sufficient motives, imagine they can by such severity render the pupils more docile; perhaps they may, but it will be to the detriment of their character and spirit; by making them more supple, they deprive them of all spring; excessive rigor brutalizes them, and whilst compelling their obedience, the teachers lose their confidence; by forcing them into submission they make hypocrites of them! The pupils are thereby led to mistrust their teachers and to hide rather than avoid their faults. Look at an intelligent artist: he uses only the means that are necessary and avoids using the more powerful which would be apt to spoil or ruin his work. Punishment is the extreme means of education, which is to be used only after all the other means prove ineffective, and the more seldom it is used, the more effective it will be.

In fine, the more religious the education, the less need there is of severity. If the pupil's conscience is well trained, and piety possesses his heart, he will, of himself, yield obedience and perform all his duties, and will also watch over and correct his inordinate inclinations and defects. Piety, the fear of God, the holy practices of religion alone will impose on the child's eyes, tongue and senses, that wholesome restraint, that curb of conscience, which are the best warrants of innocence and virtue

18. THE IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST. (E)

I. *To imitate Jesus Christ is our true life.* "The disciple shall be perfect, if he is like his Master" (Luke 6. 40). "I have given you an example, that as I have done, so do you also" (John 13. 15). All the saints acquired perfection by imitating Jesus Christ, our divine Model, and every one of them is able to say to us with St. Paul: "Be ye my imitators, as I am of Christ" (1. Cor. 4. 16). There is no other way to acquire perfection, for Jesus is "the way" (John 14. 6). Every Christian is bound to imitate Jesus Christ. The religious, having been called by a special grace to follow Jesus Christ more closely, has a greater obligation to conform his life more perfectly to that of his divine Model. "Every man," says St. Gregory of Nyssa, "is the painter of his own life; the colors are the virtues, and the brush is his will; and the original he must copy is Jesus Christ." "Moreover," says Father Gautrelet, "Christian perfection and religious perfection are two paintings of the same subject, but it is represented in the latter in a more excellent manner than in the former." "The true Christian, the saint, is the living and rational dwelling of Jesus Christ," says St. Athanasius, "built of good works and holy doc-

trines.” “The saint,” says Mgr. de Ségur, “bears Jesus Christ within himself, not only in his soul, but even in his body. Everything in him reflects Jesus, his thoughts, his sentiments, his acts, and even his physiognomy, which reproduces, as far as possible, the Saviour’s dignity, gracefulness and loveliness.” St. Vincent de Paul, after visiting St. Francis de Sales, said of him: “The bishop of Geneva is a living image of Christ.” And what was not the life of St. Vincent himself, unless a perfect expression of the life of the divine Saviour? In his thoughts, words and actions, he took his inspiration from Jesus Christ, repeated His language and closely followed his divine Model. And our Lord Himself, wishing to make St. Teresa a faithful image of Himself, said to her: “Thou shalt constantly strive to have an upright intention in all things, to be detached from all things, and to keep thy gaze fixed on Me, in order to render thy actions conformable to Mine.” Let us also be true imitators of Jesus Christ, and follow Him, not from afar, but as closely as possible, for he that wishes to “abide in Him, ought himself also to walk, even as He walked” (I John 2. 6).

II. *How we should imitate Jesus Christ.* St. Paul tells us: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2. 5); and: “As therefore you have received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk ye in Him” (Col. 2. 6).

1. In the first place, we should have the same

mind as that of Jesus, that is, be inspired by His sentiments, His teaching. The religious who earnestly desires the perfection his taste requires of him, must be deeply imbued with the sayings and examples of the Divine Wisdom. If he knows them only superficially, his imitation of Jesus will be only superficial. It behooves us, therefore, often to read and meditate on the life and passion of Jesus Christ, that we may be thoroughly penetrated with His doctrine and virtues. "I especially recommend to you mental prayer on our Lord's life and passion," says St. Francis de Sales. If we often contemplate Him in our meditations, our whole soul will be filled with Him and we shall learn how to form our actions according to the pattern of His. He is the light of the world; it is, therefore, in Him, by Him and for Him that we shall be enlightened. And, just as little children, by dint of hearing their mothers speak, learn also to speak their language, we also by remaining near Jesus in meditation, and observing His words, His actions and His affections, will learn, with the help of His grace, to speak, act and will like Him."

"Unhappy is he," says St. Augustine, "who knows all profane sciences, but does not know Thee, O Lord! but happy is he who knows Thee, although he may be ignorant of everything else. He alone is truly happy who knows Thee, and honors Thee as God." In the science of Jesus Christ our mind and our heart will be truly satis-

fied. "What seekest thou," asks St. Bernard, "which thou dost not find in Jesus Christ? If thou art sick, He is thy Physician; if thou art banished, He is thy Guide; if thou art forsaken, He is thy King to protect thee; if thou art assailed, He is thy Defender; if thou art thirsty, He is thy refreshment; if thou art cold, He is thy Garment; if thou art sad, He will be thy Joy; if thou art in darkness, He will be thy Light; if thou art an orphan, He will be thy Father."

Our divine Saviour became man not only to save us, but also to be known and imitated by us. "The Son of God came upon earth," says Louis of Granada, "in order to show us how He lived among men, what words He said, what works He performed, how He behaved in adversity and prosperity, in society, in solitude, in friendship, in hatred, in greatness and in obscurity, and how perfectly He practised charity, humility, patience, obedience, meekness, poverty, prayer, mortification, zeal for souls, severity towards Himself, kindness and indulgence towards the neighbor, and all the other virtues." The study of the Man-God is the only true science which fills up the vacuum of our mind and quenches its thirst for knowledge. Is there anything more consoling than to know all that Jesus has done for our poor soul, how He thought of it, when we forgot Him; how He redeemed it at the price of unspeakable torments, when we were selling it to hell for a vile pleasure; how He waited for us, called us,

sought us, when we were fleeing from Him in the midst of the dangers of the world. There is nothing more consoling to our heart than the thought of the divine goodness of Jesus towards us. Let us exclaim with St. Augustine: "O soul, espoused to Jesus Christ, love Him who has loved thee so much, think on Him who thinks so much on thee; seek Him who is seeking thee; Love God, thy divine Spouse; watch with thy God, who watches over thee; labor with Him, for He labors only for thee; be pure with Him who is infinite purity, be holy with the Holy of holies."

In the second place, we should live as He lived, and walk in His footsteps. "Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should walk in His steps. He did no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile, when He suffered, He threatened not" (I Pet. 2. 21). He who wishes to abide in Jesus Christ, "ought himself also to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2. 6). "To walk like Jesus Christ," says Louis of Granada, "is to despise all that He despised, not to fear the trials He underwent, to believe all that He taught, to hope for all that He promised, to return good for evil, blessings for curses, to pray for his enemies, to have compassion on the wicked, to bear with contradictions, with the proud; in a word, to die to the flesh and live for God alone."

Let us adopt the thoughts of Jesus. He habitually thought on God, His Father, on heaven and

eternity; the object of His thoughts was noble and useful, the glory of Him who had sent Him and the salvation of men, His brethren. They were all holy and governed by charity, justice, wisdom, goodness and mercy. Such also should be the objects that occupy our intellect, that noble faculty which we so often devote to trifles, to worldly things, to what flatters our self-love.

We should place our heart where Jesus placed His. He loved only His heavenly Father and the souls of men. If we allow any other love to penetrate into our heart, we shall never be perfect imitators of Jesus Christ; for he who walks in His steps, can live only for the glory of God, his personal holiness and the salvation of his neighbor. But the love of Jesus was a love of sacrifice, as we know. Hence a true religious immolates all, absolutely all to Jesus Christ, shrinks from no difficulty, and shows his love by his sacrifices.

We should adopt the desires of Jesus Christ, which all consisted in fulfilling the will of His Father, that will which was the nourishment of his soul. We should, therefore, desire only to live for God and to have His will as our reliance in all we do and suffer. We know His will, for it is entirely contained in our rules and in the directions of our superiors. Let us always say: "Behold me, O God, I am come to fulfil Thy will." If in all we do during our whole life we desire

only to do the will of God, it may be said of us when we shall have left this world: "He was subject and obedient until death, following in all things the examples of Jesus Christ."

Let us, in fine, perform all our external actions as Jesus Christ would have performed them. St. Vincent de Paul before performing an action, before speaking or answering, would ask himself: "How would Jesus act in my place? What would He say in this circumstance?" Let us follow this saint's example. "Therefore," says St. Bonaventure, "look upon Jesus as your Model, when you are walking, standing still, sitting down, eating, speaking, keeping silence, alone or with others." In this manner we shall become true and holy religious. "What should he do who has the honor of being called a Christian?" asks St. Gregory of Nyssa; "he should carefully watch over all his thoughts, over all his words, over all his actions, and examine whether each of them leads to Christ, or away from Him. If he acts, thinks or speaks under the influence of some passion, he may be sure that this does not come from Christ, but from Satan who delights in defiling the soul in the mire of the passions, and to tarnish the brightness of a precious stone. But if he, in all things, preserves the serenity of his soul, it is Christ, the Author and Prince of Peace, who acts in him."

This imitation of Christ is far above our nat-

ural powers, and can be acquired by us only when our earnest and constant efforts are assisted by divine grace, obtained by fervent and persevering prayers.

19. THE LOVE OF GOD. (E)

I. *Why we should love God.* “I am come to cast fire upon the earth,” says our divine Saviour, “and what will I, but that it be kindled?” (Luke 12. 49). God asks nothing else of us than that we should love Him. “My son, give Me thy heart” (Prov. 23. 26). “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord require of thee, but that thou love the Lord thy God and serve Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul?” (Deut. 10. 12). “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and shall move between thy eyes; and thou shalt write them in the entry and on the doors of thy house” (Deut. 6. 5-9). “He that loveth not abideth in death” (1 John 3. 14).

God is most lovely in Himself. He possesses in Himself infinite beauty, infinite goodness, infinite holiness, infinite power, infinite perfection, in a word, all that is lovely and capable of ravish-

ing our heart. Compared to God the most beautiful, sublime and admirable creature, even all creatures combined are as nothing. He is so lovely that it is enough for the saints to see and love Him, in order to experience so great a joy as to make them perfectly happy and contented for all eternity. We love Him not, or but little, because we know Him not or but little. The saints loved Him ardently, because they knew Him far better than we.

God loves us. "Observe," says St. Alphonsus, "that God deserves our love, because He loved us first. Let us consider the beauties and wonders of heaven and earth, they all exhort us to love God who created them in order to win our heart. Let us cast our eyes on the cross. God hath so loved us as to give up, for our sake, His only-begotten Son to death. The cross, the wounds of Jesus, according to St. Bernard, loudly proclaim His excessive love for us." Let us listen to St. Teresa addressing Jesus crucified: "If I love Thee, O Lord, Thou knowest that it is not on account of heaven which Thou promisest me; if I fear to offend Thee, it is not on account of hell with which Thou threatenest me; it is Thou Thyself alone, O Lord, that drawest me to Thee; it is because I see Thee, my Lord Jesus, nailed to the cross, because I see Thy body covered with wounds and in the agony of death. And Thy love has taken such possession of my heart, that even were there no heaven, I would still love Thee,

and even if there were no hell, I would still fear Thee. Thou needest not give me anything to induce me to love Thee, for even if I did not hope for what I hope, I would, nevertheless love Thee as much as I now love Thee."

Our very heart tells us to love God. What does our heart wish for? For happiness. But, says St. Augustine, "our heart is happy only when it rests in God." St. Alphonsus, commenting these words of St. Paul, "all things work together unto good for those who love God" (Rom. 8.28), says: "They who love God, are always contented, because it is a pleasure for them to fulfil the will of God even in adverse circumstances. They find a subject of joy in their trials, because they know that, by accepting them, they perform what is pleasing to their beloved Lord. Nothing, therefore, is capable of disturbing their happiness."

What does the heart of the religious seek? Perfection, that is, the most intimate union with the Creator. But by charity our soul becomes the living tabernacle of the Blessed Trinity. "If any one love Me, . . ." says our divine Saviour, "and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him," (John 14.23). "He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4.16). "Love God," says St. Augustine, "and do what you will." Whatever is inspired by divine love is good. Divine love, when inspiring our acts of self-de-

nial, of obedience, of patience and of the other virtues, raises them to a high degree of perfection.

II. *How we should love God.* He Himself indicates how much we must love Him, that is, *with our whole heart*. God deserves to be loved with an infinite, a boundless love. But this is beyond the power of creatures, however perfect or holy they may be. Since we cannot love God with an infinite love, we are bound to love Him as much as we can; that is, not only as much as our natural capacity enables us, but also as perfectly as the divine grace in us empowers us. Our desire of perfection, our hatred of sin; our daily actions, the warfare we wage against our passions and against temptations are not only means that lead us to perfect love, but are obligations imposed on us by the requirements of divine love. "To relish divine consolation," says St. Frances de Chantal, "is not solid divine love; but to humble ourselves, to suffer and to undergo trials, to die to ourselves, and to desire to be known by God only, that is true love. If glory and happiness could be separated from God, I would not take a step to acquire them, for I wish to seek God alone."

We should also love God *solely*. Our God is a jealous God; He wishes to possess our whole heart, and will not endure a rival in it. "Divine love, in order to be pure," says St. Francis de Sales, "must consume in us all that is not God." "May God," says St. Joseph Calasanctius, "possess my whole heart." Our heart should contain

no affection which is not for God. This is the detachment He requires from His true disciples; we must be detached even from our own selves. "Every division of our heart excites the wrath of God," says St. Augustine; "for He will soon yield to Satan the share the religious intended to give God in his heart, and withdraws from that ungrateful heart."

Finally, we should love God *generously*. Love is repaid by love, and generosity by generosity. This is the reason why he who understands well how much God loves him, wishes to love God in his turn; and when he beholds his God nailed to the cross through the excess of His love, he finds that he does not love God generously enough, and therefore he loves Him with a pure and disinterested love, and loves Him because He is his God. "My God," exclaimed St. Joseph Cupertino, "I love Thee so much that, even if Thou hadst predestined me to the torments of hell, I would wish to render Thee as much homage and adoration as the greatest saints of heaven have ever offered Thee; and after serving Thee perfectly well, I would be satisfied wherever Thou wouldst send me. If I serve God, it is not out of fear of hell. I serve Him for His own sake, for Him only do I seek, Him only do I desire, Him only do I want."

He who really loves God is willing to labor for God all his life amid all hardships and obstacles. "When the love of God has taken possession of a

soul," says St. John Chrysostom, "it produces therein an insatiable desire to labor for Him, so that, however great and numerous her works, however long the time she devotes to His service, she counts it all as nothing, and is grieved at doing so little for Him, and would esteem it a real happiness if she could consume herself wholly and die for Him. Hence, whatever she does, she always looks upon herself as useless, for, learning from her love how much God deserves, she sees, by this heavenly light, all that is defective in her works, she acknowledges that all her labors are but little for so great a Master.

Love is not only generous in laboring for God, but delights in suffering for Him whom she loves solely. "We should all burn with this holy fire," says St. Teresa, "and she who has it not, should not consider herself as a true Carmelite. Our souls should thirst, not for rest, but for sufferings, so that we may imitate our divine Spouse in something." The saints even constituted themselves as voluntary victims of divine love. "I am more happy in chastising my body," says St. Margaret of Cortona, "than if I possessed a kingdom, for I have resolved never to make a treaty of peace with my body." Venerable Ann of Jesus, at the age of sixteen years, made the hitherto unheard-of vow always to act in opposition to her natural inclinations and never to allow herself the slightest gratification in anything. And in her old age she was able to assert

that she had never satisfied herself in anything, not even in drinking water. The Lives of the Saints abound in examples of austerities, which make us shudder, which they performed, inspired by their ardent love of God. One day our divine Saviour asked St. Mechtildis: "Dost thou love Me?" The saint replied: "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Then Jesus asked her: "Dost thou love Me so as to undergo labors, sufferings and humiliations?" And she answered: "Thou knowest, indeed, that there is no torment capable of separating me from Thee." And Jesus added: "But if these torments were frightful, wouldst thou suffer them promptly and cheerfully?" "Most cheerfully," replied the saint. Let us examine our conscience, that we may find out whether we can repeat the words of this saint to our Lord, and whether we are ready, in order to prove our love for our divine Redeemer, to make every sacrifice and practise perfect and perpetual self-denial.

III. Finally, let us examine whether we possess *the signs of a true love*. The true basis of solid divine love is a great devotion to our Saviour's Passion. "Do you wish," asks St. Bonaventure, "to increase constantly in virtue and grace, meditate unceasingly on the Passion of Jesus Christ. The exercise the best adapted to sanctify a soul is the frequent consideration of the Saviour's sufferings."

It is at the foot of the cross that it does us good

to examine our conscience and study our heart. Let us, therefore, ask ourselves: 1. Have I a sincere desire to increase daily in divine love? Let us imitate St. Philip Neri. This great saint never succeeded in convincing himself that he loved God, and notwithstanding that terrible trial, he daily exerted himself to love his Creator and Saviour perfectly. "My God," he would say, "I have never yet loved Thee, and I long to love Thee." 2. Is my love active and patient? That is, according to St. Alphonsus, do I act always for God, by at least seeking, through an upright intention, to do what pleases Him best? Do I willingly bear for His sake, all adversities, such as poverty, tribulations, sickness, contradictions, failure, etc.? 3. Does my heart entertain a secret attachment to some creature, to some office, employment, place, etc.? "Just as death detaches us from worldly goods," says Alphonsus, "in like manner, the love of God, when it reigns in a heart, strips it of all affection for perishable objects." Detachment is necessary for perfect love. Let us seriously examine ourselves on these points, if we sincerely desire to make progress in divine love.

Let us resolve to acquire and to make progress in divine love. "The first means for doing so," says Ven. Father Passerat, "is prayer; the second, third, fourth, tenth, hundredth is prayer." "I request each one," writes St. Alphonsus to his religious, "to ask Jesus Christ, without ceasing,

for His holy love. Without it, your best resolutions will have but few salutary results. To obtain this holy love, have a tender devotion to our divine Saviour's Passion. It seems to me impossible for him who often meditates on the Passion, not to succeed in loving Jesus Christ." "The essence of true love," says St. Gerard, "consists in belonging wholly to God, in conforming ourselves always to His will and in striving never to commit a wilful fault, for such faults are highly displeasing to God."

20. ZEAL FOR SOULS. (E)

“The best way to practise charity,” says St. Alphonsus, “is to be zealous for our neighbor’s spiritual welfare. As much as the soul is more noble than the body, so much also is the charity we practise towards the soul of our neighbor more pleasing to God than that which we exercise towards his body.” When St. Teresa loved some one, it was his soul that she loved; and her love for a soul consisted in ardently wishing that soul to be beautiful, great and holy. God was the beginning and the end of her affections, as He should be of every sincere affection.

He who is animated with zeal hates, shuns, prevents, detests, rejects, combats and, if possible, overthrows all that is opposed to God, that is, to His will, to His glory and to the sanctification of His holy name, and is ready to undergo every hardship, every persecution and even death itself to promote the glory of God and save souls. We should not imagine that zeal for the salvation of souls is a virtue that belongs only to priests, for it belongs to all Christians and especially to religious. St. Teresa wished that each of her religious should be an apostle, and it was a subject of great joy for her amid the difficult labors of

her many foundations to think that each new convent would be a center of prayers and austerities for the salvation of souls.

I. Whence does zeal for the salvation of souls proceed? From a three-fold love, the love of God, the love of our neighbor, and the love of our own interests.

1. Zeal for souls is *a direct effect of our love for God*. To love God is to procure to God an increase of His external glory, for this is the only good we can do Him. Hence the saints ardently longed to know, love and glorify their Creator and Saviour. But the soul that is truly enamored of God, is not content with loving God herself, for, the greater her progress in divine love, the more she longs that other souls should love God with her and also in her stead. She wishes to procure friends for God, and she seeks by every means in her power to enkindle the fire of charity in the heart of her neighbor. "If you wish to go to God," says St. Gregory, "endeavor not to appear alone before Him." "If you love God," says St. Augustine, "draw all hearts to His love." If we love the Lord, we will endeavor not to be the only ones that love Him, but will seek to inspire with the love that burns within us, all those persons over whom we possess some influence, says St. Alphonsus. When Jesus Christ bestowed on St. Teresa the inestimable honor of choosing her as His spouse, He said to her: "Henceforth thou shalt, like a true spouse, be

full of zeal for My honor." By our holy profession our soul became the spouse of Jesus Christ; if we do not have the interests of His glory at heart, whose duty will it be? Wherefore, if as true religious, we belong wholly to the God of our heart, what St. Bonaventure wrote of St. Francis of Assisi should be equally applicable to us: "He would never have considered himself a true friend of Jesus Christ, if he had not been inflamed with love for the salvation of the souls redeemed by our well-beloved Saviour." Hence this great saint was wont to say that there is no work more pleasing to God than to procure the salvation of our brethren. "I am convinced," says St. Teresa, "that our Lord prizes a soul we have won for Him by our efforts and prayers, with the assistance of His mercy, more highly than all the other services we can render Him." "He is greatest in the love of God," says St. Gregory, "who draws to Him the greatest number of souls."

One day our divine Saviour appeared to Venerable Ann of St. Bartholomew; He seemed to be much grieved. Placing His hand on her left shoulder, He said: "See how, notwithstanding My exceedingly great love, so many souls are lost! Help Me to save them!" To us religious our divine Saviour addresses the same appeal. It was for our perfection and for the salvation of our brethren, that He bid us to follow Him by entering the religious state. "God," said St.

Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, "has not separated us from the world merely for our own profit, but also that we might appease His wrath against sinners. We religious shall have to render an account to God of so many souls that are daily eternally lost, for had we faithfully recommended them to God, and implored their pardon from Him, we perhaps would have disarmed His justice and prevented their loss."

2. Secondly, zeal for the salvation of souls is *the outcome of the love we owe our neighbor*. "This," says St. Jure, "is the greatest and most important effect of charity towards our neighbor, because it concerns his eternity, and in eternity his preservation from the sovereign misery and his possession of the sovereign happiness." To love is to procure the welfare of the beloved; hence it is evident that the most striking testimony of love we can give a person is to free him from the pains and torments of hell and procure him the riches, honors and enjoyments of heaven. And at the cost of how great labors and hardships should we not be willing to procure this heavenly happiness to our neighbor, since one soul is worth all the life and passion of our divine Saviour? Wherefore, if we truly love our neighbor, we should be willing, according to our state of life, to co-operate in his salvation and sanctification, however much it may cost us.

3. *Our own interest* requires us to be very zealous for our neighbor's salvation. Our first

and only true interest is our own salvation, our own perfection. And who can tell how great merits zeal for the salvation of souls procures us? "If to save the life of our neighbor's body has so great merit before God," asks St. Gregory, "how great a reward does not he deserve who saves from eternal death the soul of his neighbor and enables it to live forever? He who saves souls expiates his own sins, acquires many merits and draws down upon himself numberless favors from Jesus Christ. We can offer to God no greater sacrifice than zeal for souls." "My brethren," says St. James (5. 19, 20), "if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him; he should know that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." "When we procure the salvation of our fellow-men," says Cornelius à Lapide, "we do as much for our own salvation as for theirs."

II. *How to exercise zeal for the salvation of souls.* By imitating Jesus Christ, our Model. To save us Jesus made use of four means: prayer, labor, good example and suffering.

1. *By prayer.* Jesus Christ devoted Himself to prayer all His life, as if He had been powerless to save the world without prayer. He complains that His servants do not sufficiently recommend sinners to Him. One day He said to St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi: "See, daughter, how so many Christians are in the power of the devil;

if My elect did not free them by their prayers, they would become his prey." But this duty of charity God requires principally from priests and religious. The same saint was wont fifty times daily to make an offering of the Redeemer's precious blood for the salvation of sinners, and to recommend them to God in all her spiritual exercises. To St. Catharine of Siena our Lord said: "I conjure thee to pray to Me for sinners; it is in their behalf that I request thy tears and thy labors, that they may be partakers of My mercy." Let us pray much for sinners as well as for the perseverance of the just and the perfection of holy souls. When St. Clement Hofbauer's words and exhortations failed to overcome the obduracy of sinners, he had recourse to prayer. For sinners he prayed much and often; for them he performed penance and offered himself to God as a victim in their behalf, and urged others to do the same. He would not desist from importuning the Lord until he obtained the conversion of those he was praying for. One day, believing himself alone in the church, he went before the tabernacle and with an abundance of tears he began to pray aloud with great fervor: "O Jesus my beloved Lord, give me that soul. Deign to hear me, I beseech Thee, otherwise I shall be obliged to have recourse to Thy Blessed Mother, who, I am sure, will not reject my prayers." Thus praying and weeping he continued a long time.

2. We should convert souls *by our labor* also.

The whole life of Jesus was spent in labor. At Nazareth He worked with St. Joseph; during His public ministry He labored as a missionary. The religious who has to perform manual labor, should devote himself generously, in a spirit of faith and love, for the salvation of souls, to all that obedience requires of him. In this you have the example of many saints, such as St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, St. Gerard, Blessed Felix of Nicosia. They who have to nurse the sick, to care for the inmates in reformatories and the like, should seek first the salvation of their souls. Their patron is St. Vincent de Paul. In frequent conferences he kept up their courage, saying: "Your calling is so much the more meritorious, as nature finds but little satisfaction therein. Your chief care, after the love of God and the desire to please His divine Majesty, should be to serve the poor sick with great kindness, gentleness and sympathy, and in listening to their complaints as a good mother listens to those of her sick children. Offer yourselves to God for the salvation of those you serve for His sake." If God has called you to educate children, what a noble, divine mission! God one day showed to St. Ignatius a soul cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ. This sight inflamed the saint more than ever with an intense zeal for the salvation of souls; he could calm the ardor of this zeal only by instituting his holy Society for the salvation of souls by teaching and preaching.

Ven. Father Champagnat was a model of zeal

for all who are called to teach children as may be seen from the conferences marked C. Blessed Julia Billiard, herself a foundress of a Congregation for educating girls, is also a model of zeal for all religious teachers. "It is by educating the young," she said, "that we are called to rear Christian mothers for Christian families, and thus save souls that would otherwise be lost. God has destined us to procure the salvation of many souls; and if we were to save only one soul, would not Jesus Christ have shed all his blood for even one soul? When I behold you all engaged in this work, you appear to me greater than all earthly potentates. And how great will be your joy on the day of judgment, when the souls of all these little ones will surround you and thank you for having shown them the way to heaven. And who are we that are called to this sublime vocation? Poor miserable creatures! Oh, how angels envy our happiness!"

As to you who are called to the priesthood, it is from you that God demands souls, for you are charged with all that concerns the honor and service of God and the salvation of souls. To you is given the office of making known to the world God and His perfections, His justice and mercy, His commandments, and to cause men to show Him the respect, the obedience and the love due to Him; to see and bring back the stray sheep, were it even to cost you your life. You are not destined to acquire earthly treasures and honors,

but only to labor to cause men to love God: you are "God's coadjutors" (I Cor. 3.9). To this object all your labors should be directed. And if God demands of all men a strict account of the employment of their time, how rigorous shall be the account of the priest who wasted so much of his time in mere trifles, whilst he allowed souls to perish or to go astray! This very thought makes us shudder.

It may happen that later on God will demand of us religious, whatever be our position in the convent, other sacrifices, for instance, to go to distant countries, and even to labor among pagans and unbelievers. Never shall we have a better proof than this that God loves us. Happy we should be, if obedience would tell us: "Go in the name of the Lord to save the abandoned souls of your fellow-men, for the glory of God and the honor of your Institute! Go and assist the souls that are perishing, to know, love and serve God and secure their salvation, were it even to cost you your life!" "How happy I am," said a good religious, "to show that I love Jesus Christ, and to sacrifice my life for the salvation of souls! I have never felt more sure of gaining heaven."

3. The third means of exercising *zeal for souls* is giving good example. "Words may convince, but it is example that persuades." "A holy religious," says St. Alphonsus, "can sanctify his whole community by his words and his good example, even with the intention of inducing his

fellow-religious to imitate him. No one should have therein a scruple of vain-glory. The actions which have nothing extraordinary, and which are appropriate to every religious tending to perfection according to his obligation, should be performed also with the intention of giving good example and to induce others to cling more closely to God, in accordance with the saying of Jesus Christ: 'So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven' " (Mat. 5. 16). This is true zeal for the perfection of your fellow-religious.

It behooves us also to draw seculars to the practice of virtue by our good example. St. Francis of Assisi one day said to his companion that he was going to preach. They went out into the town, walking with their eyes modestly cast down. When they returned to the convent, his companion asked him: "When are you going to preach?" He replied: "We have already preached by our modest deportment." God alone can see our heart; men can see only our exterior actions, and are either edified or scandalized by them. It is, then, our duty to edify them by our good example, otherwise we shall have to give a strict account to Jesus Christ. Our divine Saviour called St. John Baptist "a burning and shining light" (John 5. 35). Every religious should possess a heart all aglow with divine love and should shine before all men by his good example. According to St. Am-

brose the very sight of a holy man is an admonition well calculated to draw worldlings to the practice of virtue. "The very appearance of St. Gregory of Nyssa," says St. Ephrem, excited devotion, so that no one could look at him without feeling moved to become better." If we also wish to win souls for Jesus Christ, let us so live that our very life may become a silent preaching to all. Modesty, reserve, recollection, edifying conversation will make of us missionaries everywhere and always.

4. In fine, we should, like Jesus Christ, save souls by *sufferings*. One day St. Lutgarde, filled with divine love, prayed for the grace of dying soon, so as to go to heaven more quickly. But our Saviour appeared to her and showed her the bleeding wounds of His hands, feet and side, saying: "Look, beloved daughter, and listen how My wounds cry out to thee, in order that My blood be not shed in vain, and that My death may not be fruitless." Lutgarde, trembling with fear and love, asked Jesus what was the meaning of the cries of His wounds. "My wounds cry out to thee," said Jesus, "and ask thee to appease, by thy sufferings and tears, the wrath of God, My Father, that He may not punish sinners, but that they may be converted."

And we also should listen to the mysterious voice of our Saviour's wounds asking us for souls. Let us offer Him for the salvation of our brethren all our trials, both interior and exterior, all the

sufferings connected with the community life, all our illnesses and pains, all our mortifications, both interior and exterior, and all the crosses and trials that come to us. Let us imitate a holy soul, Mother Mary Teresa, foundress of the Sœurs Réparatrices, who said: "A thousand years of sufferings and crosses, if necessary, that I may leave after me some hearts to my Saviour!" St. Lutgarde one day beheld Jesus with His bleeding wounds interceding with His heavenly Father in behalf of sinners. Then, turning to Lutgarde, He said to her: "See how I offer Myself unreservedly to God, My Father, in behalf of *My sinners*! In like manner offer thyself entirely to Me to turn away from them the punishments with which they are threatened." Should not we also respond to this invitation, saying: "Lord, here I am ready to suffer all for the salvation of souls!" Like Thee, O, Lord, I offer myself as a sacrifice for my brethren." St. Catharine of Siena besought God to give full vent to His wrath upon her and to spare sinners. This request so pleased our Lord, that He said to her: "By beseeching Me to punish thee for the sins of others, thou prayest for love, light and the knowledge of truth, for love is in proportion to sorrow for sin and increases together with it."

Blessed Felix of Nicosia imposed on himself numberless prayers, watchings, fasts and other mortifications to obtain for poor sinners the grace of repentance and eternal salvation. One day

Father Macarius entered his cell and found him taking a most frightful discipline. "Enough," exclaimed the Father, "I forbid you to continue." Felix stopped at once; but turning at once to his superior, said weeping copiously: "Father, please let me continue, I will not strike so hard, if you wish, but please let me continue; it is for a poor sinner who is now giving himself up to sin. O God, if he were struck dead on the spot by the divine justice!" Father Macarius ordered Felix to tell him in confidence who the sinner was. When Felix had told him, he was allowed to continue. Not long after the unfortunate sinner was killed by a rival. Felix then redoubled his austerities and prayers. Some time after the soul of that sinner appeared to Blessed Felix, saying: "I come to thank you; although I was mortally wounded, I was able to repent and God has been merciful to me: it is you who obtained for me the grace to repent. It is you also, who, by your prayers and penances, have shortened the time of my atonement in purgatory. Thanks to you I am happy for all eternity. May you be blessed!"

Let us be full of courage! Let us have an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls, for on judgment day, the souls we have saved will be for us a crown of glory. St. Amandus appeared to St. Aldegonda surrounded by all the souls he had won to God. St. Paul calls the Philippians, whom he had converted, "his joy and his crown" (Phil. 4.1).

Prayer of St. Teresa. "My God, have compassion on those who have none on themselves. Lazarus did not ask Thee to raise him to life. Thou wroughtest this miracle at the prayer of a sinful woman; behold now a greater sinner at Thy feet. Show forth Thy mercy; yes, I implore it for those who refuse to pray for it. Consider not our blindness; but deign rather to look upon the blood Thy divine Son shed for us."

21. PRUDENCE. (E)

Prudence is the first of the moral virtues, because it extends to all the virtuous actions of our life, in such a manner that a virtuous deed, which is not accompanied by prudence, ceases to be virtuous. According to St. Basil, "prudence is the knowledge of what it behooves us to do and not to do." "Prudence therefore," says St. Jure, "regulates our conduct, governs and directs our actions, and serves as the eye of all the other virtues in order to guide them in their operations. Every moral virtue walks between two vices opposed to it, the one through excess, and the other through deficiency. For instance, liberality is the mean between prodigality and avarice. A virtue, moreover, should be practised according to certain circumstances of time and place, of persons, of one's vocation, etc. It belongs to prudence to keep us from error and mistakes in this, for it judges and discerns what is good, useful and advantageous for us to do. St. Basil says that "a man devoid of prudence is like a vessel without a pilot." Finally, "it is the office of prudence," says St. Vincent de Paul, "to choose the means adapted for the end we have in view, which is none other than to go to God; and it indicates the most direct and secure ways to lead us to Him."

True supernatural prudence always takes the principles of faith as the rule of conduct, as a motive for acting. It enables us to judge all things as Jesus judges them, and to act in every circumstance in life as He would have acted in our place. Wherefore, prudence should regulate our words, our actions, our relations.

1. *Prudence should regulate our words.* Prudence in speech is called discretion, and imprudence therein is called indiscretion. Discretion is the practical, true and reflected knowledge of what should be said and of what should remain unsaid. The prudent man is always very discreet in his words, for he reflects before speaking, he examines with whom he is to speak, for he knows that the friends to whom he can open his heart, are rare. "Prudence," says St. Vincent de Paul, "enables us to speak wisely, appropriately and cautiously concerning things that are good in themselves and in their consequences, and to suppress or keep silence concerning those that are or may prove hurtful." "A fool uttereth all his mind," says the Holy Ghost (Prov. 29. 11). If we open our heart to one whom we should mistrust, we shall be in constant danger of his abusing our confidence to our detriment.

We should be discreet in speaking with persons outside of our community, weigh our words well, and avoid being confidential with them. We may say innocently and with impunity many things to our brethren in religion, which would be very in-

opportune, if said to outsiders. "All things are lawful to me, but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify" (1 Cor. 10. 22, 23). "The lips of the unwise will tell foolish things; but the words of the wise shall be weighed in a balance. The heart of the fools is in their mouths; and the mouth of wise men is in their heart" (Eccli. 21. 28, 29). "Make a balance for thy words, and a just bridle for thy mouth" (Eccli. 28. 29). "Hast thou seen a man hasty to speak? Folly is to be looked for rather than his amendment" (Prov. 29. 20). Discretion requires us not to disclose the internal affairs of the community, or the faults or eccentricities of our brethren to outsiders either in speech or in our correspondence; also to keep the secrets entrusted to us; not to complain of our superiors even among ourselves; also to avoid speaking unnecessarily on subjects disagreeable to those present, and many others besides. Indiscretion often causes ill-feeling, disturbs peace and concord in a community. Where discretion reigns, there also is peace and charity.

2. *Prudence should regulate our actions.* This cannot be done without combating all the vices opposed to it, precipitancy, want of reflexion, inconstancy and negligence. Precipitancy seeks to undertake, act and finish quickly, and does not take time to reflect either before beginning or whilst performing something; and if the undertaking does not go on favorably, or requires patience, the

first impulse over, precipitancy produces only inconstancy and negligence. Prudence has, therefore, to begin by putting precipitancy aside from all our occupations both spiritual, as study, spiritual exercises, and material, as manual labor. For its task is to moderate a too natural activity. "It is prudence," says Louis of Granada, "which teaches us to moderate ourselves in our occupations, not to overburden ourselves with excessive mental application, not to lose sight of our interior by being too deeply absorbed by external things, and not to neglect the duties the love of God imposes on us, by applying ourselves too energetically to the duties required by the love of our neighbor." Prudence, though moderating our excessive natural activity, nevertheless, induces us to practise generosity, one of the great factors of merit, and to self-sacrifice, qualities that pertain to great merit; it is, therefore, opposed to sloth and indifference.

Prudence also causes us to perform all we do with reflexion and recollection; for we should never apply ourselves to a task in such a manner as to be incapable of thinking of something else. We should always carefully perform what we have to do, but calmly and without passion, so that we may be able to direct our thoughts to God from time to time. In this manner we shall act as true religious, and our work, whatever it may be, will never interfere with our holiness. Wherefore, let us, when beginning something and now and then

in the course of our occupations, raise our heart to God by acts of love, offering, resignation, or by some prayer. True prudence orders all things to their end, which is God. The truly prudent religious seeks in all his employments to unite himself to God, to begin, continue and finish all he does under the eye of God, and this renders his life full of merits.

The virtue of prudence will also teach us that nothing is well performed in the convent, unless it is done according to holy obedience. If we wish never to make a mistake and always to succeed, and never to prove inconstant or negligent, we should obey our superiors in all things and depend on them for everything. Prudence, which is very rare and, therefore, difficult to acquire, should enlighten and walk in front of the other virtues with a lighted torch. But obedience is a very easy prudence; it gives the subject a great advantage over his superior, for he can make no mistake in obeying, but the superior may easily blunder in commanding; he may easily be indiscreet and offend God in commanding; but the subject in obeying avoids these faults and pleases God. "Since the spirit of discernment," says St. Bernard, "is very rare in this world, we should let our obedience supply in us the lack of that virtue. Let us do what is commanded us, neither more nor less, and in the manner prescribed; and thus we shall acquire the prudence we need, and supply the experience that is wanting to us."

He who is young and still in his first fervor, and feels strongly inclined to perform corporal penances and austerities, should carefully allow himself to be guided by obedience, and not by his whims or indiscretion. "Prudence," says Louis of Granada, "teaches us to treat our body with discretion, avoiding excessive delicacy and excessive rigor, lest we make it effeminate or unfit to perform the work assigned to us."

The superior of a religious community needs prudence more than any one else. Too great haste spoils the best works and undertakings. Great prudence is necessary in correcting one's subjects, for "anger never performs the work of God"; also in making admonitions even in general, for a religious seeks and should always find a father's, a mother's heart, in his superior. Reflection and prayer should preside over all his corrections and remarks, if they are to bear fruit; they should proceed from a heart filled with the meekness of Jesus Christ. The superior should know how to be patient, await and study the favorable moment, to begin, continue and conclude his admonition with meekness and kindness, in a word, to steep it in honey, or rather to place it in the heart of his divine Model. "The longer I live," wrote St. Teresa, "the more clearly I perceive that it behooves a superior to use love and kindness. I no longer govern with as much severity as formerly; I do not know whether this is to be ascribed to the fact that the religious do not give me any occasion

for severity, or because experience has taught me that kindness is far more profitable." When this saint found it necessary to reprove a Sister, she began by convincing her of her wrong-doing and of her having deserved a penance, so that she might receive the reproof with greater fruit.

To acquire this necessary moderation, the superior should reflect much and be slow in all that he undertakes. He should consult God in prayer, also his appointed consultors, and, if necessary, some other member of the community who has much experience and prudence. "It is true," wrote St. Vincent de Paul to a superior who found fault with his slowness, "that I am slow in undertaking things and in performing them; and nevertheless, I have never seen any affair spoiled by my slowness; on the contrary, everything has been done in due time after the necessary reflexion and precautions, and after much prayer to God, who is much pleased when we take a long time to consider maturely whatever concerns His service."

3. Lastly, *prudence should regulate all our relations with the world.* A want of prudence and circumspection with seculars is never without fault in a religious. Every religious should be a man of reflexion, circumspect, and ever on his guard against the malevolence of the world; no one should be more watchful than he over his words and actions, for it is not enough for him to be a saint, he should also be looked upon as one, according to St. Paul's counsel to his disciple

Titus (2. 7, 8): "In all things show thyself an example of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity; the sound word that cannot be blamed, that he, who is against us, may be afraid, having no evil to say of us." Many things that are lawful and proper for seculars, are not so for religious. And if the world dreams of scandal, and even looks for it, is it not, perhaps, because the levity of some religious gives them occasion for this? They laugh and joke with seculars as freely as they do with their fellow-religious, and this even without distinction of persons, age or sex. Their imprudence is apt to give scandal, and even to injure the good name of their community. We should, therefore, be always cautious and prudent with seculars, and especially when we *have to visit* them. Useless and unnecessary visits are fraught with more or less spiritual danger for the religious themselves, as experience proves.

The good religious loves his convent, his cell, is addicted to work, study, recollection and prayer, and avoids all unnecessary visits, idle conversations, and is never so happy as when he can be at home and be faithful to the regular observance. When called to the parlor, he obeys the call and takes care not to lose his time there in idle gossip, worldly conversations, eager inquiry after news, or in discussing the shortcomings of his neighbor. Let us take to heart the admonition of St. Basil: "When you have to deal

with seculars, be most careful to safeguard your own reputation and that of your community.”

If we wish to acquire true prudence, we must become men of prayer, for, as Cassian says, prudence is not a secondary virtue that may be acquired by human means; we must expect it from God’s bounty. “Bless God,” said Tobias to his son, “and desire of Him to direct thy ways” (Tob. 4. 20). In the next place, we should subdue our passions, for nothing blinds the mind more than an unsubdued passion. We should also mistrust ourselves, for we are not more virtuous or stronger than others. We should not neglect to seek counsel of the wise and prudent. “Seek counsel always of a wise man,” said Tobias to his son (4. 19). “With all thy possession purchase prudence; take hold on her, and she shall exalt thee; thou shalt be glorified by her, when thou shalt embrace her” (Prov. 4. 7, 8). “The science of the saints is true prudence” (Prov. 9. 10).

22. GRATITUDE. (E)

I. Gratitude induces us not only to acknowledge the benefits we have received, but also to give our benefactors something in return for their benefits, and even more than we have received from them. Such is the teaching of St. Thomas. St. Teresa is an admirable and imitable model of this beautiful virtue, which is allied to charity. When she considered the immense benefits she had received from the divine bounty, she felt urged by what she so expressively called "the torment of gratitude." In like manner she would never consider herself grateful enough towards those who did her even the slightest favor. She prayed daily for a poor man who had, in one of her journeys, drawn from a spring a jug of water for her. Some one gave her for her foundation at Seville an antependium for an altar, on which the sacrifice of Abraham was very poorly represented. One of the nuns found it in very bad taste, and said: "The angel looks as if he was taking the discipline." "Oh, daughter," replied the saint much grieved, "is that your gratitude for our benefactor's gift? Do not let me hear any more such unbecoming remarks."

A certain person had rendered much valuable

assistance in one of her foundations; but later on caused much grief and trouble to the community. The prioress sought means to get rid of all further relations with her. "For the love of our Lord, do not endeavor to get rid of her," wrote St. Teresa to the prioress, "since there is no sin in this matter; I cannot bear that we should be ungrateful towards those who have done us good." She had numberless ways in her poverty to testify her gratitude by some pious memento, and inspired her daughters with the same sentiments, sometimes playfully saying to them: "Be not ungrateful." She especially sought to show her gratitude by praying much for all who showed her kindness, and often obtained thereby the hundred-fold for them in this life.

Every religious should so manifest a sincere and generous gratitude towards all benefactors, both spiritual and temporal, as to give no occasion to be suspected of ingratitude. Gratitude to his dear parents requires that he should every day pray fervently for their intentions and take a lively interest in their spiritual and temporal welfare; he should continue to pray for them after they have departed this life. Next to his parents the greatest benefactor of every religious is the Institute to which he belongs.

II. *Gratitude towards our Order or Institute.* Some religious seem not to have a clear idea of the obligation of gratitude they have contracted towards their Institute.

1. *Our Institute is a real mother to us.* Many a time religious use the expression: "Our Mother the Congregation," etc.; and this is true for our Institute is more our Mother according to grace, than she who gave us birth according to nature. The latter gave us life and for some years bestowed on us the temporal cares required by our body and the spiritual cares so necessary to our soul. Moreover, near her we have enjoyed some family happiness. Our spiritual Mother has procured us all this and done much more for us. She has brought us forth to a life of perfection, whose very name and nature were unknown to us. She has taught us to live in God and for God. During our spiritual infancy, that is our novitiate, she nourished us with all that the life in God possesses most beautiful and perfect, in order to "form Christ in us" (Gal. 4. 19). She will continue this holy education during all our life until she shall place our soul among the Cherubim and Seraphim, for her only solicitude is to see us growing, like the Child Jesus, in wisdom and virtue. The only grief of her maternal heart is to see some of her children languishing in the paths of holiness, or even showing themselves ungrateful towards her by turning their back on her.

The food with which she sustains our spiritual life is quite divine: the word of God, the Blessed Eucharist, the good examples of our fellow-religious, the wise counsels and prudent admonitions of experienced superiors, whose love for us

is like that of St. Alphonsus for his brethren: "My brethren, be persuaded that, next to God, each one of you is the sole object of my affection. I am ready to give for each one of you my blood and my life." When we were invested with our holy habit, the superior said to us: "Put on the new man, who is created according to God." The new man is the supernatural man, the man of grace. Our whole life has become a tissue of divine graces: graces of the sacraments, of assiduous prayer, of a life of devotedness and obedience, of self-denial, of self-surrender and dependence. "You are," says St. Alphonsus, "fortunate plants cultivated in a fertile soil upon which heavenly dew comes down in abundance."

Our Institute will lavish all these cares on us, not for a few years only, but during all our life. We needed but a short time to find out that our Institute takes no less care of our body than of our soul. How many of us, had they remained in the world, would not be able to enjoy what their Institute now provides them with most abundantly? Let us ask ourselves whether we have suffered want in it? Whether we have not always been well provided with all that we needed? Moreover, we are free from all temporal cares, we need not worry like people in the world, how we are going to earn our living, how we shall be able to provide for our family. This exemption from all worldly cares is one of the greatest boons of the religious life.

Finally, you have enjoyed in the world at times the pure joys of the family life. But is not every convent a model of the true family life? Where in the world reigns the same cordial charity, the same mutual support, which flourishes in a fervent Institute? Nowhere else will you find the same pleasant and joyful recreations, those little family feasts which so strongly rivet our hearts to our fellow-religious and to our Institute, and which naturally call to our mind the saying of Ven. Father Passerat: "I love only what is sweet, natural, kind and cheerful, for it is thus that I represent to myself Jesus Christ and heaven." Hence we see every good religious who is filled with this family spirit, always cheerful, pleasant, sincere and affectionate, and contributing to the mutual happiness of his companions. For him these words of the psalmist are realized: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 132. 1).

2. Our Institute is truly our good Mother. But her benefits demand of us gratitude and tokens of affection and attachment. We should testify our gratitude by showing ourselves her true children. To be her true children it behooves us, in the first place, to be *strongly attached to our holy Rule*. It is not the habit that makes a religious, but regularity. The true pillars of a religious Institute are not the very able and talented, for if they do not lead a life even more edifying than the others, they will do more harm than good. The

true pillars are those who lead the most regular life, for, although they may be only simple lay-brothers, they keep up the Institute by drawing upon it an abundance of divine graces, and their life is a constant powerful preaching. They also maintain the reputation of the Institute in the world and draw into it solid vocations. "Persecutions," wrote St. Alphonsus to his religious, "can only benefit us; but what can really harm the Congregation is the wilful and habitual transgression of a small rule, because it keeps divine grace from our Institute."

He is a worthy son of his Institute who is entirely devoted to it. We should be wholly devoted to ours and consecrate to it our labors, our time, our very life. It should be as dear to us as the apple of our eye. Its works should interest us, its trials grieve us, its devotions and practices should also be ours. We should exert ourselves to be filled with its spirit, to live by its life. All that we do for our Institute, however much and great it may be, will never sufficiently repay what so good a Mother has done and will do for us; our gratitude will never equal her benefits in our regard. In a certain sense we ought to apply to our Institute the exhortation of St. Paulinus concerning the gratitude we owe to God. "Love Him, love Him always, love Him as long as you live. Say not that you are unable to acquit yourself of your debt of gratitude. You have the means to pay it, since you have your heart in your

power; give it, therefore, wholly and unreservedly to Him."

Finally, we shall be true children of our Institute, *if we are faithful to it until death*. Perseverance is a stumbling-block for some religious. To be deeply impressed with the necessity of perseverance, let us recall the chief maxims of the saints summarized as follows by St. Alphonsus:

1. The holy founders of religious Institutes will themselves expel from them certain leprous members, such as those who are unfaithful to their vow of chastity, or the proud, haughty and disobedient, for they destroy the good name of their Institute and injure obedience which is the basis of every religious Institute.

2. Those who lose their vocation shall have no more happiness. Pride and the desire to live as they please have caused many a religious to leave, who assuredly no longer enjoyed true peace. Peace comes from above, and consists in the rest and calmness of the soul in God; but God does not impart it to those who resist His light, nor to those who have wilfully lost their vocation.

3. Vocation is lost gradually. Unfaithfulness in little things, in things of minor importance, leads by degrees to the loss of the religious spirit, and with its loss to the loss of one's vocation.

4. It is very probable that the loss of vocation is frequently followed by the forfeiture of eternal salvation. And if any of those unfortunate persons is saved, he will, nevertheless, lose the bright

crown which was to be the reward of his fidelity and perseverance.

5. Those religious who die in an Institute which is truly fervent and holy, shall be saved and saved as saints, for only those persevere in such an Institute who endeavor to lead a fervent life. Such religious may, like the pious Father Humarque, who had long been blind, say at their last moments: "Why should I fear death? Have I not given myself wholly to God, and have I not served Him as well as I could? Oh, what a grace for me to die as a son of St. Alphonsus, who promised that all the faithful members of his Congregation would go to heaven and enjoy a high place in it!"

"I beseech you," with St. Paul, "to walk in a manner worthy of the vocation in which you have been called" (Eph. 4. 1). Do not lose the beautiful crown God has prepared for every religious who lives and dies in fervor. Let your constant fervor be ever the true token of gratitude you offer to your Institute. Wherefore, often thank our Lord and the Blessed Virgin for having drawn you out of the world into so noble a vocation, and ask them often daily for the grace of perseverance in fervor and in your holy vocation, and you will surely obtain it.

O Mary, Mother of perseverance, pray for us!

23. PATIENCE. (E)

Patience enables us to bear with calmness, equanimity and generosity physical and moral sufferings from some supernatural motive. It moderates and regulates sadness, pain, dejection and grief.

I. *Patience is the mirror of our holiness.* A good mirror gives a faithful image of the object before it. In like manner, our patience gives us a faithful and exact image of our holiness. In other words, we possess as much perfection as we have patience with ourselves and as we show patience towards others in the trials of life. "Patience," says St. James (1.4), "hath a perfect work." "He is perfect," says Ven. Bede, "whose patience cannot be overcome." "The virtues without patience," says Cornelius à Lapide, "resemble a wall built without cement or mortar, which will soon fall down, for patience is the cement that binds the virtues together." "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial of our holiness," says St. Paul (Rom. 5.4). "Patience is necessary for you, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Hebr. 10.36). One day St. Angela of Foligno, in order that the devil might not deceive her, asked our divine

Saviour for a sign by which she might recognize that it was He Himself who was speaking to her. "Thou shalt know," He said, "that I am in thee, when, not content with patiently suffering the evils that befall thee, thou shalt love them as real benefits. Of all the signs of the grace of God, this is the most indubitable." To judge of the real holiness of St. Gerard, St. Alphonsus needed no other proof than the holy Brother's patience in bearing a fearful calumny.

II. *Patience procures continued merits.* "Many," says the Imitation, "find the saying harsh, that we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus. But it will be much harder to hear these words on the last day: 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' And, nevertheless, in the cross is the height of virtue, the perfection of holiness. What man is there that has not his troubles, and what day is there when we have nothing to suffer? Were we to dispose of and regulate all things according to our desires and our views, we shall always have something to suffer, whether we will it or no. What saint has been without cross and tribulation in this world? Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself was not one hour during His life without experiencing the sufferings of His Passion." This law of trial and suffering is an admirable effect of the divine mercy and goodness towards us; we are sinners and deeply indebted to the divine justice; we are poor and destitute, and are obliged to enrich our-

selves; suffering pays, suffering merits. And God, in His Providence, takes care to send us every day some occasion to practise patience, so that we may both pay our debts and grow rich.

St. Francis of Assisi, feeling oppressed by many pains and almost blind, offered to God this humble prayer: "O Lord, my God, cast Thy eyes upon me, and succor me; grant me the grace to bear all these infirmities patiently." A voice replied immediately: "Francis, what price should be set on that which enables one to obtain a priceless kingdom? Know that the sufferings thou offerest are more estimable than all the riches in the world, even were all the mountains changed into pure gold, and their rocks into precious stones, and all the water in the ocean into balsam." "Yes, Lord," exclaimed Francis, "it is thus that I prize the sufferings Thou sendest me, for I know Thou wilt that they should be the punishment of my sins, so that Thou mayst show me mercy forever." "Rejoice then," added the voice, "for it is the road thou art in that leads to heaven."

God, indeed, *does not take pleasure in seeing us suffer*. "No," says St. Alphonsus; "but the unhappy state of being sinners in which we are and our obligations towards Jesus Christ require that, for His sake, we should renounce earthly pleasures, and willingly embrace the cross He gives us to carry in this life, and should follow Him who, laden with a cross far heavier than ours, goes before us leading us to the conquest of a life of per-

fect happiness. No, God does not take pleasure in seeing us suffer; but, since He is the sovereign Justice, He cannot leave our faults unpunished; thence follows the necessity for us of atoning for them by our patience, and at the same time, of meriting thereby the eternal happiness to which He has destined us. How beautifully and sweetly has divine Providence thus provided for the rights of His justice and secured for us salvation and perfect happiness! "Let us remember well," says St. Teresa, "that we can acquire through the sufferings that God sends and those that come from our neighbor, greater merit in one day, than we can gain in ten years through mortifications and other exercises of our own choice." We here give some reasons for this.

1. In the first place, by our patience we offer to God *a complete sacrifice*. The daily sufferings and trials, when borne with patience, burn by a slow fire all our self-love and immolate us to God. Such a sacrifice is pure and pleasing to God and unmixed with selfishness. St. John beheld in heaven an immense multitude before the throne of God, all clothed in white garments, for nothing defiled can enter heaven, and holding in their hands palms, the symbol of martyrdom. But are all the saints martyrs? Yes, for all the adults who are saved, even if they have not shed their blood for the faith, have been martyrs at least by their patience in resisting the assaults of the devil and the lusts of the flesh, in bearing contradiction, con-

tempt, and the trials of their body and soul; all these are like so many executioners who daily immolate us, slowly, secretly but meritoriously, to the greater glory of God.

2. Patience, moreover, *purifies our heart more and more and attaches it to God*. “Be certain,” says the Imitation, “that thou shalt spend thy life in dying; and the more thou diest to thyself, the more also thou beginnest to live for God.” “Be persuaded,” said our divine Saviour to St. Teresa, “that he who is most loved by My Father, receives from Him the heaviest crosses.” In the designs of God, the cross is the great instrument by which He detaches His friends from themselves and all creatures. For there is need of the whole power of the cross, for our attachment to ourselves and to all that concerns us, can be broken only by painful rendings. This is the reason why God ceases not to send trials to the souls with whom He wishes to unite Himself perfectly. The trials cause their soul to bleed, their will to groan; the victim is immolated and God alone reigns over those living ruins. “Listen,” said our Lord to Bl. Henry Suso, “to the reason for which I try My servants in so many ways. I dwell and abide in a soul as in a paradise of delights, and I cannot permit her to take pleasure outside of Me, or that she should have any affection for creatures; and because I wish to possess her pure and chaste, I surround her with thorns and shut her up in adversity, lest she should escape Me. I sow in her

path pains and anguish, so that she may find no rest in things created, but should place all her happiness in the depth of My divinity. Whatever crosses I send thee, elevate thee, and unite thee far more intimately and more firmly to My divinity, than all the crosses of thy own choice. I grant My graces to both the good and the wicked, but I reserve My crosses for the elect. Examine and compare wisely, and thou shalt understand that it were better to burn a hundred years in a furnace, than to be deprived of the smallest cross I could and would give thee. Dost thou not acquire an infinite reward by generously bearing afflictions? The cross is so precious a divine gift, that wert thou to remain prostrate on the ground for years, thou wouldst not even then be worthy to obtain it."

We can now understand this saying of the Imitation: "Nothing is more pleasing to God, nothing is more salutary in this world than to suffer willingly for Christ's sake." "Contradictions," said the Bl. Curé d'Ars, "place us at the foot of the cross, and the cross places us at heaven's gate. To reach it, we need to be trod upon, to be vilified, despised and ground. All sufferings are sweet, when borne in union with our Lord. And, indeed, what does suffering matter? It lasts but a moment. If we could spend a week in heaven, we would grasp the meaning of a momentary suffering, and would not find a cross heavy enough, or a trial bitter enough. The cross is God's gift to

His friends." We should, then, be grateful to God for the crosses He sends us.

3. Finally, *patience renders us like Jesus Christ*, whom Tertullian calls the Lord and Master of patience, because He was never without afflictions and sufferings. The more we resemble Him, the more holy and the more rich in merits we shall be. The cross was His most faithful companion in life. On it He was born and died, and by it He merited His glory in heaven. He found no better means of sanctifying us than suffering. Hence He says to us: "Take up your cross daily and follow Me." And how can we enter heaven without cross, since the life of Jesus Christ, our Head and Redeemer, was a continual cross and martyrdom? How can we glory in being disciples of Jesus crucified, if we repel, or show repugnance for the fruits of the cross, that is, sufferings, humiliations, poverty, pains, sickness and all that is opposed to our self-love? The saints earnestly desired to resemble Jesus Christ and to approach daily nearer their divine Model, and therefore they longed for sufferings and practised an admirable patience in their trials. "Do you wish to feel your crosses but little," said St. Clare of Montefalco to her nuns, "contemplate the cross of Jesus Christ." "Is there a trial," asks St. Bernard, "which will not taste sweet to you, if you reflect on all the bitterness of Christ's Passion?" "O Lord," exclaimed St. Catharine of Genoa, "it is thirty-six

years ago since Thou didst enlighten me, and since then I have longed for nothing else than sufferings in both my body and my soul." "Lord," besought St. Francis Xavier, "take not this cross from me, unless it be to give me a heavier one." St. Gerard, after experiencing in his soul and body the whole Passion of the Saviour, would say: "Lord, I suffer, because I have nothing to suffer." "Think diligently upon Him," says St. Paul, "that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds" (Hebr. 12. 3). Therefore patience sanctifies us, purifies us, renders us like Jesus Christ, and enriches us with merits for life everlasting. "Suffering," says Bl. Grignon de Montfort, "is a caress from the hand of Jesus, a proof of His affection, the true seal of His elect."

III. *Patience procures us peace with ourselves and with our neighbor.* In the practical life there is perhaps no other virtue we need more than patience, because we everywhere find difficulties and trials. We must be patient with ourselves, with our excitable character, with our excited nerves. We must be patient with others, with their defects, with their blunders, their way of speaking and acting. We must be patient with our superiors, who have also their defects, their peculiarities, their own way of judging and acting. "Look heavenward, look down on your surroundings," says the Imitation, "look within yourself, you will find crosses everywhere. It behooves

you to be everywhere patient, if you wish to enjoy interior peace and merit an eternal crown." Every one here below desires peace and would like to find it without suffering; but this is impossible in our present state, for crosses await us everywhere. And how shall we find peace in the midst of all these crosses? By embracing with patience all our daily crosses. "In your patience," says Jesus, "you shall possess your souls" (Luke 21. 19). "May the Lord," prays St. Paul, "direct your hearts in the charity of God and the patience of Christ" (2 Thess. 3. 5); "The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4. 7). "Be patient towards all men" (1 Thess. 5. 14). One day after the Bl. Curé d'Ars had preached on heaven, some one asked him: "What must we do to deserve that glorious reward?" "We need divine grace and the cross," he replied.

Let us daily endeavor to practise patience with ourselves, with our companions, with our superiors and with all the persons the duties of our state require us to meet. In all our trials, failures, sufferings, etc., let us recall the patience of our divine Model. "Let us," says St. Paul, "run by patience to the fight (perfection) proposed to us" (Hebr. 12. 1); "and may the Lord direct our hearts in the charity of God and the patience of Christ" (2 Thess. 3. 5), "for the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory

to come that shall be revealed in us'' (Rom. 8. 18).
Let us always say with St. Alphonsus: "My beloved Saviour, so greatly despised for my sake, how sweet it is to suffer for Thy sake!"

24. HUMILITY. (E)

There are two kinds of humility: humility of the mind, by which we know ourselves and our misery; and humility of heart by which we practise what the humility of mind teaches us; in other words, it is the courage of truth. Humility of the mind is not the virtue of humility, because it is only speculative, a knowledge of our true misery; but it is an indispensable condition of the humility of the heart, which is the virtue of humility.

I. *Humility of the mind* requires, in the first place, *a thorough knowledge of ourselves*. "Man's whole science," says St. Augustine, "consists in knowing that, of himself, he is nothing, and that what he is, is from God and for God." This knowledge of ourselves is so necessary that every external act of humility that is not based thereon, is like the humility of the pharisees described by our Saviour: "You are like whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of all filthiness" (Mat. 23. 27). It behooves us, therefore, to acquire self-knowledge. "If we wish to know what we really are," says St. Bernard, "we should be ever mindful of the answers to these three questions: 'What have we been? What are we? and What we shall one day be?'"

What have we been? “Ashes and dust,” replies the Holy Ghost (Eccli. 10.9). God made our soul from nothing and our body from the slime of the earth, and if He did not preserve us we should at once return to nothing. “Although God has given us great graces,” says St. Teresa, “we are of ourselves less than nothing.”

What are we then? We are escaped prisoners from hell. God created us out of nothing; had we remained in nothingness, we would never have been able wilfully to place ourselves in a worse condition. Our divine Saviour said of Judas: “It would have been better for him, had he not been born.” Judas was a traitor, and have not we also been traitors by our sins? Traitors to God to whom we swore fidelity; traitors to our own soul, when we yielded to sinful pleasures and caused her spiritual death. We may, in all truth, call ourselves the most miserable of sinners, the most ungrateful of men towards God, our greatest Benefactor. Who knows whether one of our sins, on account of God’s choice graces towards us, is not more heinous before God than a hundred or a thousand sins of worldlings? We have no reason to glory in our gifts, in our talents, etc., for “what have we that we have not received? And if we have received, why should we glory, as if we had not received it?” (1 Cor. 4.7). All that we have, our sins excepted, we have received from God, and we are bound to acknowledge it and be grateful for it.

And what shall we one day be? What does a grave tell us? Holy Job replies: "Worms, corruption, dried up bones and dust." Such shall our body be. And where shall our soul be, which is far more prone to hell by her evil inclinations than to heaven? What will become of that "heart perverse above all things"? (Jer. 17. 9). The religious state may be compared to the earthly paradise; and yet our first parents lost their innocence in the earthly paradise. The religious may be compared also to the college of the apostles, but did not Judas, one of its members, fall into the most abominable of crimes? Wherefore St. Paul thus warns us: "Let him who thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10. 12). And the Holy One calls "blessed the man who is always fearful" (Prov. 28. 14).

Humility of the mind, in the second place, requires that *we should know God*. Man cannot thoroughly know his being, his misery, his helplessness, unless he knows God. The saints in their meditations considered and sought a thorough knowledge of the divine perfections, and the sight of them overwhelmed them, as it were, in their own nothingness. "The truly humble soul," says a certain saint, "raises herself with all her might to God, whose holiness and incomprehensible love for men she perceives. Then reëntering into herself, she sees the infinite distance between Him and herself, and by means of the divine light that enlightens her, she perceives clearly her own

stains and defects as we can see the atoms of dust floating in the air, by means of the rays of the sun penetrating into a room." "The more holy souls consider the divine perfections," says St. Gregory, "the more they know that they themselves are as nothing." "All the saints," says St. Anselm, "who make progress in the knowledge of God, acknowledge their nothingness so much the more as they have increased in the knowledge of the divine perfections." "In order to know myself," said St. Francis of Assisi, "and to understand that I am not good for anything, and that I am nothing, I found no better means than to consider the infinite and incomprehensible abyss of the Deity." "Dost thou know, daughter," said our Saviour to St. Catharine of Siena, "what thou art and what I am? If thou learnest these two things, thou shalt be happy. Thou art she who is nothing, and I am He who is."

Those who are unable to rise so high, can acquire the same knowledge by meditating on the infinite mercy of the Most High in the work of our redemption. Let them meditate on the humiliations of Jesus Christ, and "if that medicine," says St. Augustine, "does not cure their pride, I know not what else can cure it." Jesus Christ Himself invites us to this meditation, when He says: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Mat. 11.28). They should often take the crucifix in their hands, for it is the principal book of the true religious, and is a sum-

mary of all the Saviour's humiliations. He hangs on the cross to teach us to love humiliations and to detest every motion of pride. "O humility," exclaims St. Bernard, "Christ's special virtue, how thou confoundest our pride and our vanity!"

II. *Humility of the heart.* It is the true virtue of humility and the natural fruit of humility of the mind. It induces our will to abase ourselves sincerely and to practise self-contempt. Its first result is entire submission to God. "Be humble," says the Prince of the apostles, "under the mighty hand of God" (1 Pet. 5. 6). In the second place, it induces us to submit to our neighbor on account of the contempt we have of ourselves as being the most wretched of men. All our exterior acts of humility must be sincere, otherwise they are a dangerous hypocrisy. "Humiliation," says St. Bernard, "is the road to humility, just as patience is the road to peace, and study, to science. The true acts of humility should be consistent with each one's state and dignity. For instance, the humility of a bishop is not that of a simple priest, nor is that of a superior that of a subject. The extraordinary acts of humility found in the Lives of the Saints were dictated rather by the fervor of charity, which always aims at a more perfect resemblance to Jesus humbled and scoffed at, and are more to be admired than imitated.

III. *Degrees of humility.* The first degree consists in *having a low opinion of ourselves*. We ought not, however, to let every one know that we

have a low opinion of ourselves, for this would smack of pride. "We often say that we are nothing, miserable sinners," observes St. Francis de Sales;" but we would be very sorry, if people were to take us at our word and treat us as such. True humility does not make a show of itself, and scarcely ever utters humble words, for it desires not only to hide its other virtues, but even to conceal itself. Wherefore, let us not utter humble words, or if we do, let us do so sincerely; let us never keep our eyes cast down without humbling our heart."

The second degree of humility is *to love to remain unknown and to be despised*. "Humility of the heart, or of the will," says St. Alphonsus, "requires that we take complacency in being despised by others." Elsewhere the same saint says: "Humility of the heart consists in desiring to be despised by others, and to take pleasure in humiliations."

The third degree of humility consists in *referring everything to God and in not attributing anything to ourselves*. Such was Mary's humility when she said to the angel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," and pronounced these words of the *Magnificat*: "My soul doth glorify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiced in God my Saviour, because He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaid." Among all the miracles of St. Gerard the greatest was his humility amid the honors every one lavished upon him. Although few Saints were

avored with greater extraordinary gifts, he never gloried in them. He had a horror of praise and he would flee from the very shadow of esteem and go to conceal himself. He would have wished to lead an obscure life. One day having arrived at a place where no one knew him, and having no suspicion that any one would overhear him, he knelt down and said: "Lord, I thank Thee that no one here knows me." "I would like," said St. Joseph Calasanctius, "to be holy in order to be humble; and still more holy in order to be more humble, and to be perfectly holy in order to be perfectly humble."

IV. *Excellence of humility.* In the first place, humility is the foundation of all the virtues. Even "faith," says St. Augustine, "does not enter into a proud mind, but into an humble heart." "Humility," says St. Gregory, "is the root of all the virtues. Every flower draws its beauty and freshness from its root; when culled it soon withers. In like manner, virtue detached from humility withers and vanishes. The root is in the ground and devoid of beauty; though trodden upon, it is the plant's principle of life. The humble man also delights in being hidden, trampled under foot, and the humility in his inmost heart imparts life to all the virtues. Furthermore, the plant, in order to be lasting and to produce many fruits, must sink its roots deep into the ground, and the deeper they are, the larger it will grow and the more abundant will be its fruits. If we wish our virtues to wax

strong and fertile in good works, we must take care that humility should daily strike deeper roots in our soul.

In the second place, *humility is the guardian of the virtues*. "He who amasses virtues without humility," says St. Gregory, "is like a man that carries dust in an open vessel against a strong wind." Humility alone can destroy our self-love, that disease which ravages the virtues, those delicate plants in our soul.

In the third place, *humility disposes our soul for the reception of the abundant graces of God*. "God resisteth the proud," says St. James, "and giveth grace to the humble." The reason is that vain-glory so fills the soul as to leave no room for divine grace. "God," says St. Francis de Sales, "requires our soul to be perfectly empty of vain-glory, in order to cause His grace to flow therein with the unction of the Holy Ghost." "When you humble yourself," says St. Augustine, "God descends to you in order to unite Himself to you; but when you give way to pride, He departs from you." "The prayer of him that humbleth himself," says the Holy Ghost, "penetrateth the clouds and withdraweth not until the Most High behold" (Eccli. 35. 21). "Pride," says St. Gregory, "is the evident mark of the reprobate, whilst humility is that of the predestined." If we understood the power of humility over God, we would not dread humbling ourselves or undergoing humiliations.

V. *The practice of humility.* First, as to *humility of the mind.* Whatever good we possess or do belongs to God, comes from God. He who is humble is always mindful of this, attributes nothing, except evil, to himself, and considers himself as deserving only of contempt; he delights in being despised and treated as of no account; and this is what renders him dear to God. He who glorifies himself in anything whatever, robs God of His glory, for “to God alone be honor and glory.” If we do much good, let us remember that the saints have done more than we. Let us never rely on our own strength, on our good resolutions; that would be pride. But let us place all our trust in God, who alone can impart success. The proud man, like St. Peter, relies on his own strength and falls miserably. But the humble man, mistrusting himself, acquires the power of God. If we happen to commit a fault, let us not get discouraged or angry with ourselves, for that would be pride; but let us at once humble ourselves, make an act of contrition, and learn therefrom that we are weak and place our trust more than ever in God alone. If we hear that some one has committed a great sin, a crime, let us not presume on ourselves or show any astonishment, but let us have compassion for him who has fallen, and dread lest the same misfortune may happen to us, and say with David: “Had the Lord not helped me, I should now be in hell” (Ps. 93. 17). God granted to a holy person to behold her own soul; she found it so horrid and

deformed, that she exclaimed: "Lord, for mercy's sake, take away from me the sight of that monster!" Let us never prefer ourselves to any one whatever, but let us, on the contrary, consider ourselves as the worst of all, as the outcast of the world.

Secondly, as to *humility of the heart*. Let us always avoid saying anything in our praise, whether it be concerning our conduct, talents, good works, or our family. "Let another, and not thy own mouth praise thee," says the Holy Ghost (Prov. 27. 2). Let us never say anything good or evil about ourselves; often he who speaks ill of himself, does so from a motive of pride. "We are only what we are in the sight of God." Therefore, let us place no reliance on the praises of men. Let us beware of seeking honorable employments, for this would be a sign of pride. Let us love abject employments, and flee all that would distinguish us from our fellow-religious. Let us not envy those who possess more talent, ability or popularity than we. When we are reprov'd, let us not get disturbed, or vindicate ourselves, but let us interiorly humble ourselves and thank God for the correction.

Let us faithfully and humbly practise the acts of humility our Rule or our customs prescribe and others also, provided we shun all singularity. Willingness to oblige and please our fellow-religious has its root in humility; its absence in us would be a mark that we are unfit for the commu-

nity life. The proud religious cannot live or permit others to live in peace. Wherefore let us practise humility by our willingness to submit in all things to our superiors, and to respect, serve, help, oblige, cheer up and please our companions, and bear with joy all contradictions and all the faults of our brethren. "A good religious," says St. Joseph Calasanctius, "despises the world and takes pleasure in being despised by it." Let us, therefore, accept cheerfully all contempt, from whomsoever it may come, and say with David: "It is good for me, O Lord, to have been humbled by Thee."

Let us always and everywhere manfully keep our proper place, and beseech Jesus humbled on the cross, humbled in His prison of the tabernacle, for the strength to be humble on all occasions. "I wish to you all," wrote St. Francis de Sales to the Visitandines, "the perfection of humility. I prefer seeing you endowed with more humility and less of the other virtues, than to see you with more of the other virtues and less humility."

25. MEEKNESS. (E)

According to St. Vincent de Paul meekness has three acts. The first act has a twofold office or function: to repress the motions of anger, the sallies of that fire that rises to one's face, disturbs the soul; and also to direct the will when it is necessary to correct or even rigorously to chastise, so that it may not act passionately or whimsically, but only through the conviction of not being able to act otherwise. It imitates in this Jesus Christ who vigorously drove the venders out of the temple. If our divine Saviour sometimes displayed power, He never showed anger, for He acted for the benefit of those He corrected, and the calm decision of His will preceded His correction.

The second act of meekness is to be very affable and cordial and to possess a serenity of countenance towards those who have any intercourse with us, so that they find a certain kind of consolation or pleasure in seeing us. It is a gracefulness by which we appear to offer our affectionate devotedness to those who accost us, which may be called the key to the heart of others, for by such an affability we can easily open even the best closed hearts.

The third act of meekness consists in passing over in silence the displeasure or offense another

has caused us, in excusing the culprit if the offense was public, in treating him with kindness and patience, in a word, in returning good for evil.

I. *Excellence of the virtue of meekness.* Our divine Saviour's words and examples should convince every Christian and especially every religious of the importance of a virtue. Let us first *listen to His teaching concerning the virtue of meekness.* Two of the eight Beatitudes concern this virtue: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land," and "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Mat. 5. 4, 9). When renewing the commandments of His heavenly Father, He called that of the love of our neighbor *His own* commandment, and why? Because He came on earth to teach men a law full of meekness towards all men without distinction of persons, without excepting our enemies. "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you" (Ibid. 44). St. Paul says expressly: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6. 2). "Meekness," says St. Francis de Sales, "excels the other virtues, for it is the flower of charity." "To be perfect, charity should be united to patience and meekness," says St. Bernard.

Let us consider the examples of Jesus Christ. One day, when preaching to the people, our divine Saviour made this touching invitation: "Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will

refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls, for My yoke is sweet and My burden light" (Mat. 11. 28-30). These admirable, though simple words sum up the whole life of our Lord: meekness and patience. "Meekness," says St. Alphonsus, "attributed to the lamb, is the virtue that was especially dear to Jesus Christ who wished to be called the Lamb of God, both on account of the sacrifice of the cross on which He wished to be immolated in order to expiate our sins, and on account of the meekness He practised during His whole life, and particularly during His Passion. (Examples of His meekness: How He rebuked two of His apostles who wished to call down fire from heaven to punish the inhospitable Samaritans; how He refused to condemn the adulterous woman, merely telling her to sin no more; how He converted the Samaritan woman; how He converted St. Peter; how He prayed for and excused His murderers. See Luke 9. 55; John 8. 10; John 4. 7; Luke 22. 48; Luke 23.)

Let us consider His merciful goodness towards us, and we shall not find it so very difficult to bear meekly all contradictions. In our Saviour's teaching concerning meekness and His examples of meekness we can find sufficient subjects for our imitation as long as we live.

Another way of knowing the excellence of a virtue, is *to consider its effects*, that is, the fruits

of salvation it produces in souls. No one can question the great usefulness and the absolute necessity of meekness in the direction and sanctification of souls. "Nothing edifies and wins the heart better than a charitable kindness," says St. Francis de Sales. This saint was always seen with a smile on his lips; his manner, his words, his whole appearance reflected meekness, so that it was not astonishing that he edified every one, and that St. Vincent de Paul took him as a model. By his imperturbable meekness the saint attracted the greatest sinners no less than the purest souls, and obtained all he wished from them. "The first time I saw him," said Vincent de Paul, "I recognized in his attitude, in the serenity of his countenance, in his manner of conversing and speaking, a very expressive image of the meekness of our Lord Jesus Christ, which won my heart."

Since we have not the good fortune of witnessing the efficacy of the meekness of St. Francis over his cotemporaries, let us, at least, listen to his admirable teaching. "The humble meekness," he says, "is the virtue of virtues which our Lord so greatly recommends; wherefore it behooves us to practise it always and everywhere. For it excels the other virtues, since it is the flower of charity, which, when it is perfect, according to St. Bernard, is not only patient, but also meek and kind. Let us never get angry, for, says St. James (1. 20) 'the anger of man worketh not the justice of God.' "

There can be no doubt that meekness is absolutely necessary for all who live in community, if they wish to live in peace and do good to their brethren. "We stand so much the more in need of affability," says St. Vincent de Paul, "as our vocation obliges us often to converse together, and also with our neighbor, and this conversation is very difficult, both among ourselves, since we are perhaps of different nationalities, and at least, of different and even opposite characters and ways. It is the virtue of affability that removes these difficulties, and which, being as the soul of a good conversation, renders it not only useful, but also pleasant; it enables us to behave with propriety and mutual condescension, and perfect union and concord among us."

The superior who wishes to do a true and lasting good to his community, must show meekness in all his actions. He is a father, but a father endowed with a mother's heart. He should command and prescribe duties rather by request than by command. St. Vincent de Paul declares that it is by meekness that the superior will best secure the obedience of his subjects. St. Frances de Chantal acknowledged having tried every way to govern, and to have found that meekness and forbearance is the most successful.

The superior should show kindness even in his reproofs. "It is one thing," says St. Alphonsus, "to reprove strongly, but it is quite a different thing to reprove harshly. We must reprove

strongly grievous faults, especially if the culprit has been already admonished; but we must carefully refrain from reproving with bitterness and passion, for we would then do more harm than good. This kind of zeal is reproved by St. James (3. 14): 'If you have bitter zeal,' he says, 'glory not.' If, in rare circumstances, we find it necessary to admonish the delinquent with severity, in order to make him aware of the grievousness of his fault, we should always temper its bitterness by concluding our reproof in a kind manner." We should dress wounds, as did the good Samaritan, with wine and oil; but "as the oil floats always on top of other liquids," remarks St. Francis de Sales, "in like manner, kindness should predominate in all that we do." When the culprit is excited, we should put off the correction until his excitement is over, otherwise it would only irritate him the more. "When the house is on fire, it will never do to throw more combustibles into it," says a certain saint.

St. Vincent de Paul related that, in governing his Institute, he had three times reproved with severity, believing he had good reasons for so doing; but that he had later on repented of having done so, for all three reproofs had been fruitless; but that all those he had made with kindness, had been followed by good results. St. Francis de Sales, when reproved for his extreme kindness in correcting delinquents, said that, although he sometimes had made up his mind to be severe, he

had not the courage, when the occasion presented itself, to do so, and "to tell the truth," he said, "I feared I would, in a quarter of an hour, spill all the small amount of meekness I had exerted myself to gather for twenty-two years as a refreshing dew in the vessel of my heart."

Those who are called to labor for souls, or to educate the young, should practise this maxim of St. Vincent de Paul: "Affability, love and humility possess a wonderful power to win souls and to induce them to perform what is repugnant to nature." A great sinner, whom the saint had converted after others had labored in vain to do so, acknowledged that the saint's singular meekness and extreme charity had won his heart.

II. *How to practise meekness.* 1. The first and the greatest of means and, as we may call it, the soul of all the other means to attain constant meekness is a true and intense desire to make progress in the love of Jesus Christ, for love is the most powerful inducement to imitate the beloved. If we earnestly love our divine Model, the effort, the ideal of our life will be to resemble and please Him, and we shall generously perform what He has done, for everything becomes easy to him who loves. "He who sincerely loves Jesus Christ," says St. Alphonsus, "reaches that happy state in which he conforms himself in all things to the divine will and receives with the same peace and equanimity prosperity and adversity, consolations and afflictions, injuries and benefits. And

the fruit of this imitating love is the sweet peace of the heart enjoyed by St. Paul: "I superabound with joy in all my tribulations" (2 Cor. 7.4). "The meek," says David, "shall delight in the abundance of peace" (Ps. 36.11).

2. *Another means is to anticipate anger.* For this purpose we should strive to be always in good humor. Some persons, when they suffer from indigestion or biliousness, or meet with failure or with difficulties, or some one has said something that displeases them, or their superior has admonished them, are in bad humor. Woe then to any one that comes near them, for he will be sorry for it! Unfortunate are the subjects who have such a superior! And unfortunate the community that possesses two or three such members, who are ill-humored, peevish, irritable, etc., and especially devoid of solid virtue! "If you feel ill-humored," says St. Alphonsus, "hasten to overcome yourself by reading a good book, by singing a pious hymn, and profit by the recreation to distract your mind. He who sincerely loves Jesus Christ is never in bad humor, because he has no other will than that of God, and has all that he desires, and is, therefore, always tranquil and undisturbed, whatever may happen, and shows himself always kind and affable towards every one." This does not mean that he will never feel irritable, inclined to be excited or ill-humored. St. Clement Mary Hofbauer was of a quick and irritable disposition; although oft repressed, it was not destroyed, and

assailed him at times; and he needed constant watchfulness over himself, in order to master it completely. One day he said to some of his fellow-religious: "I constantly thank God for having left in me that fund of irritability and quick temper, for it serves to keep me humble and to preserve me from pride."

If we thus endeavor to be always in good humor, we shall avoid two great defects: getting displeased with ourselves, and getting irritated against others as soon as they do something to displease us. The first of these defects is more frequent than we imagine, and is apt to deceive us under the appearance of zeal for our own perfection. Some easily get angry with themselves, or with some tool, etc., like Cassian who used to get mad with his pen for not writing well. Some get angry with themselves for having been angry, as St. Francis de Sales remarks. This is a mark of pride and self-love. Let us then repent, humble ourselves and have patience with ourselves.

The second defect is not less prejudicial to our soul. If some one has displeased us, spoken ill of us or hurt our feelings, let us avoid speaking roughly or harshly to him. "When some one had spoken ill of me," says St. Teresa, "it seemed to me to increase my affection for him." What a pity to see certain religious who daily make mental prayers, hear Mass, receive holy Communion, etc., and who are yet so sensitive to what is said or done to them! Let us reply to every angry word,

to every reproach with meekness, for "a sweet word multiplieth friends and appeaseth enemies" (Eccli. 6. 5); "A mild answer breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury" (Prov. 15. 1).

Let us imitate St. Francis de Sales who had made an agreement with his tongue not to speak when his heart was disturbed. He who has not the courage to begin, and always to begin again to struggle energetically against himself, will never acquire great meekness. St. Alphonsus, who had naturally a quick temper, had to struggle all his life to overcome it. The violence he had to do to himself could be seen by the redness of his face; he would say then: "*Gloria Patri*," or heave a sigh, or say something pleasant to turn away his attention from the insults irascible persons heaped upon him. By dint of struggling to overcome himself, he succeeded in becoming fond of outrages and contempt.

3. Another means is *to combat the motions of anger* as soon as they arise in us. We must at once resist every motion of anger as well as of impurity. "It seems to us sometimes necessary to use severe language towards the guilty," says St. Alphonsus, "but we should practise the counsel of David: 'Be angry and sin not'" (Ps. 4. 5). But this is rather difficult. St. Francis de Sales declares that he had never got angry without being afterwards sorry for it. "It is better for us," he says, "to get along without ever being angry, than to make a moderate and wise use of anger. We should

resist and suppress energetically the very first motions of anger. If anger already tries to urge your tongue, compel it to remain silent, and pray to God who appeases hearts. If in spite of your good will, you have already yielded to anger, strive quietly to grow calm, humble yourself interiorly, and endeavor to repair your fault by obliging the person you got angry with, or by speaking kindly to him. Meekness alone can moderate and overcome anger."

"My son, do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men" (Eccli. 3. 19). "To the meek the Lord will give grace" (Prov. 3. 34).

26. CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD. (E)

I. Holiness consists in performing generously all that God requires of us and in the manner God requires. He conforms his will to the will of God who is always disposed to do and suffer all that God wills that he should do and suffer. "All the divine counsels and precepts," says St. Alphonsus, "are reduced to doing and suffering what God wills and as He wills." He calls this conformity liberty of spirit, because it enables us to embrace all that pleases Jesus Christ without taking into account the repugnance of self-love or human respect. He calls it also total indifference, because bitter and sweet are all the same to the friends of Jesus Christ; they will, not what pleases them, but only what pleases God. They are just as ready to do little things as to do great things; to do what is unpleasant as to do what is pleasant; provided they please God by what they do. He calls it also an identification. "If you wish entirely to please God," he says, "exert yourself not only to conform in all things to His will, but to *identify yourself with it*, so that you will only what God wills and, remaining united to the Lord, you may be but one spirit with Him, as St. Paul

says: 'He who is joined to the Lord, is but one spirit' '' (1 Cor. 6. 17).

"If we desire to please wholly and perfectly the heart of God, we should strive," says St. Alphonsus, "not only to practise conformity of our will with that of God, but *uniformity* of our will with His. This uniformity of our will with the divine will means that we make out of the two wills but one, so that we will only what God wills, or rather that God's will alone remains and is ours also." This is the very summit of perfection, and should be the aim of all our works, of all our desires, of all our prayers, "for it is therein," says St. Teresa, "that real union with God consists."

According to St. Francis de Sales, conformity to the will of God has three degrees. The first consists in resignation, that is, when we have to exert ourselves to conform our will to God's, and harbor, at the same time, a secret desire that the contrary should happen. For instance, a sick man, seeing death approaching, is resigned to die, but he would rather get well and live. The second degree is holy indifference; it is higher and more perfect than resignation; the indifferent heart, when God's will is known, easily conforms to it and is not moved or turned away from it by any other consideration. The third degree consists in a simple awaiting or expectation, and is the most perfect, because it concerns the will of God as yet unknown to us and causes us to will beforehand whatever God may will in our regard.

II. *Excellence of Conformity to the Will of God.*

1. In the first place, the very nature of this conformity shows its excellence. "Man's whole perfection," says St. John Chrysostom, "consists in conforming his will in all things to the divine will, because such a conformity is the most perfect and the most pure act of charity." "Our whole perfection consists," says St. Alphonsus, "in the love of our infinitely lovable God." But the whole perfection of divine love consists in the union of our will with that of God. Hence the more we are united to the will of God, the greater is the love we bear Him. It is true that mortifications, meditations, holy Communions and the works of spiritual and corporal mercy are pleasing to God, but when? When they are conformable to His will; otherwise He detests and punishes them. Our works cannot promote the glory of God if they are not pleasing to Him. The Lord does not require our sacrifices but rather that we obey Him, as the prophet Samuel said to Saul (1 Kings 15. 22). He who follows his own will rather than that of God, is, in some manner, guilty of idolatry, for he adores his own will in preference to God's will.

2. In the second place, we can see how excellent a virtue is conformity to the will of God from the examples of Jesus Christ and the saints. Conformity to the will of His Father was the favorite virtue of Jesus Christ. If He is born in a stable,

if He becomes an obedient child, if He works as a carpenter, if He performs miracles, if He suffers and dies, He has only one reason by which He explains these deep mysteries, "the will of His Father." "My food," He says, "is to do the will of Him who sent Me" (John 4. 34). (See also John 5. 40; 6. 38; 14. 31). "Whosoever," says Jesus, "shall do the will of My Father who is in heaven, is My brother" (Mat. 12. 50).

We have also the example of the heavenly spirits. "The pure and perfect love of the angels for God," says St. Alphonsus, "is found wholly in the union of their will with His. If the Seraphim believed that God willed them to spend all eternity in pulling out weeds in the gardens, they would most cheerfully do so. Hence our divine Saviour in His admirable prayer has taught us to pray for the grace to do the divine will on earth as the angels and saints do it in heaven." During their life the saints lived only to accomplish the adorable will of God, for they were persuaded that they would find perfection therein. "My sole obligation," says St. Gerard, "is to do the will of God." "God wills it," says Father Nouet, "was the great rule the saints followed in all their actions; God's will it was why they acted, suffered, lived and died." St. John of the Cross asked only for contempt and suffering, St. Thomas wished only for God Himself; St. Teresa exclaimed: "Either sufferings or death," and St. Veronica Juliani: "Neither suf-

fering nor death." They all wished for what God willed of them. But if these wishes are taken literally, those of St. Thomas and St. Veronica Juliani are the most perfect, because they chose nothing in particular, and left all to the will of God.

3. The excellence of conformity to the will of God is apparent from its advantages. It brings to the soul an unalterable peace, so that the soul will already on earth experience a foretaste of the heavenly joys. "Oh, what a sweet peace," exclaims St. Alphonsus, "does not he enjoy who keeps his will wholly united to the divine will! Since he wishes only for what God desires, his desires are always fulfilled, for nothing happens in the world but what God wills." "Whatsoever shall befall the just man," says the Holy Ghost, "shall not make him sad" (Prov. 12.21). Alphonsus the Great, a very wise king of Aragon, being asked whom he considered as the happiest man on earth, replied: "He who surrenders himself to the will of God and cheerfully receives from His hand evils as well as good things." Those who love God are always contented, because their whole pleasure consists in accomplishing the will of God in all things without exception. They rejoice amid sufferings and crosses, however numerous or painful, because they know how much they please God by cheerfully accepting from His loving hand whatever He pleases to send them.

"The unwise," says the Holy Ghost, "is as

changeable as the moon." To-day he is joyful and laughs, and to-morrow he will be sad and gloomy; to-day he is in good humor and kind, and to-morrow he will be in bad humor, irritable and furious as a tiger; because his humor depends on circumstances, on his variable feelings. But the just man, on the contrary, is like the sun, always serene, whatever may happen to him, for he finds contentment in conforming to God's holy will. The angels sang at Bethlehem: "Peace on earth to men of good will." Who are the men of good will? Only those who are always united to the will of God, which is supremely good and perfect.

Another advantage of conformity to the will of God is that all our merit consists in the earnest practice of the virtues. But, in order to be virtuous, our acts must be conformable to the will of God. Hence our good works, such as penances, holy Communions, etc., are pleasing to God only inasmuch as they accord with His holy will, otherwise they would be reprehensible and deserving of punishment. "Oh, how meritorious," exclaims St. Alphonsus, "is an act of perfect resignation to the will of God! It suffices to make one a saint." "He who conforms in all things to the will of God," says St. Vincent de Paul, "and is entirely pleased with it, leads an angelic life on earth, and even lives by the life of Jesus Christ Himself." Behold St. Paul struck down on his way to Damascus; he merely indicates his willingness to perform the Lord's will, and Jesus Christ at once pro-

claims him a vessel of election (Acts 9.15), for in giving up his own will to God, he gave everything to God, and he who gives everything to God is truly a saint.

“They are mistaken,” says St. Teresa, “who fancy that union with God consists in ecstasies, interior consolations and the like; it consists in subjecting our will to the will of God; and this subjection is perfect when our will is detached from all things and so closely united to that of God, as to have no other motion than the will of God.” Blessed Stephanie of Soncino one day beheld in a vision some of her acquaintances among the Seraphim in heaven, because during life they had perfectly united their will with the will of God. He who amid trials conforms his will to that of God, proves that he really loves God, for there is nothing more holy than to bear with love the crosses God sends.

If we accustom ourselves to practise this conformity, we shall not find it difficult to die with perfect resignation, and even with a perfect identification of our will with God’s adorable will. “He who at death makes an act of perfect conformity to the will of God,” says Ven. Louis of Blois, “will not only escape hell, but purgatory also, even if he had committed all the sins in the world.” The reason of this is that by thus accepting death, he acquires a merit similar to that of the martyrs who willingly gave their life for Jesus Christ.

Being asked in his last illness whether he con-

formed in all things to the will of God, St. Gerard replied: "I consider my bed as the will of God for me, and this His will has nailed me, as it were, to it. It seems to me that the will of God and I are one and the same thing." He caused a card to be fastened to his door, on which was written: "Here the will of God is done, as God wills, and as long as He wills." "I die contented, because I hope I have always sought nothing but the will of God. My God, I wish to die to please Thee; I wish to die in order to do Thy most holy will."

Who, but God, can tell us what place in heaven will he occupy who has lived in this perfect conformity? Such a life is a life of the most sublime love of God. In such a life are found happiness, the summit of perfection, a holy death. "We should incessantly aspire to such a life," says St. Alphonsus; "it should be the aim of all our works, of all our desires, of our meditations, of our prayers. To be able to tend efficaciously to such a life, we should implore the help of our holy patrons, of our guardian angel, and especially of Mary, the Mother of God, who was the most perfect of the saints only because she was always the most perfectly united to the will of God." The practice of this virtue is far from being easy, for it requires us to die entirely to ourselves, to our ease and comfort, to our views, our inclinations, health, reputation, relatives, in a word, to our own will and to all that is within us or has any relation to us.

III. *How to practise conformity to the will of*

God. In the first place, we should do the will of God for God. His holy will is contained in our Rule and in the orders of our superiors. "It is an illusion to imagine," says St. Alphonsus, "that we can do something better than that which obedience imposes upon us." We should even, when necessary, leave God for God, that is, omit a spiritual exercise without complaint or discontent, but cheerfully, in order to do some work duty requires, even were it to be a daily sacrifice for us to do so.

In the second place, it behooves us to accept with a hearty cheerfulness all the trials God sends us. He sometimes tries us directly by sending us sickness, interior afflictions, the death of those who are dear to us; at other times He sends us trials through others, who are instruments of His holy will, such as defamation, contempt, injustice, the dispositions of our superiors, their manner of acting, of commanding. All these trials come to us from God, and we should accept them as His gifts and bless the hand that strikes us, for God, in His infinite wisdom, knows what is best for us, and wishes our greatest good. St. Vincent was wont amid the most bitter trials to exclaim: "God be praised! God be praised!" "To those who love God," says St. Alphonsus, "bitter and sweet are all alike, for they do not wish what pleases them, but only what pleases God." "To love God," says St. Clement, "is a good so great, that we are powerless to express it.

But there is nothing that can be compared to suffering for Jesus Christ; it is the height of happiness."

We should consider the will of God even in the smallest things, for instance: in an unkind remark, a defect in the character of a companion, a failure in our work, in our undertakings, a painful accident through our carelessness, the inclemency of the seasons. We should also consider the will of God in our own natural defects, such as, our poor health, our incapacity, our poor talents. "Often kiss with a loving heart," says St. Francis de Sales, "the crosses the Lord Himself has laid upon you; do not examine whether they are made of precious and odoriferous wood, or of a vile, abject and ill-odorous wood. Let us say: 'Father, not as I will, but as Thou willest.'"

"Let us," says St. Alphonsus, "accustom ourselves in our meditations to make an offering of ourselves to God, being ready to suffer for His sake, every pain of mind and body, every trial and misfortune it may please Him to send us, and to beseech Him always to give us the strength to do His holy will in all things." "O weak mortal," exclaims St. Augustine, "what seekest thou out of God? Strive to find God, unite thyself to Him, embrace His holy will, and thou shalt be happy both in this life and in the next." "Lord Jesus," said St. Frances de Chantal, "without *ifs*, without *buts*, without exception, may Thy will be done in all who are dear to me, in all things, in myself!"

27. PATIENCE. (G)

Crosses must come. However innocent and holy a man may be, he will not be exempt from them. Even our divine Saviour, from His very birth in the wretched stable of Bethlehem, underwent sufferings and crosses during His whole life. The Blessed Virgin and all the saints have had their full share of crosses and trials. If the just have to suffer in this life, how can we poor sinners hope to escape suffering? It is, in fact, only through suffering that the sinner can be saved. "My brethren," says St. James (1.2-4), "count it all joy, when you shall fall into diverse temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience, and patience hath a perfect work; that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing." "Patience," says St. Paul, "is necessary for you, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Hebr. 10.36). "If you expect to be free from trials," says St Augustine, "you are not yet a true Christian." "He who does not know how to suffer for Jesus Christ," says St. Joseph Calasanctius, "knows not how to gain Him." "Religious," says St. Francis Xavier, "cannot long remain faithful, if they are without trials."

This world is a place of purification, a place of

merit, in which every one has to work and suffer in patience. "We can obtain no reward without merit," says St. Alphonsus, "and no merit without patience." Impatience only aggravates the cross without removing it. "He who suffers patiently," says St. Alphonsus, "suffers less and saves his soul; whilst he who suffers impatiently, suffers more and loses his soul." The penitent thief on the cross affords an example of patience and salvation in suffering; the impenitent thief, however, is an example of impatience and damnation in similar suffering. We should not endeavor to avoid the crosses God sends us, for either our efforts will make them only the heavier, or we shall get in their stead others more painful. "Far from gaining anything by refusing a cross," says St. Alphonsus, "we only render it the heavier."

Sin is an ulcer, an abscess in our soul. God is the surgeon and the cross is the lancet. "God," says St. Augustine, "is a physician, and the crosses He sends us are the remedies necessary for our salvation, and not punishments for our condemnation." The cross is, then, rather a mark of God's affection for us, a proof of His mercy in our regard. "Whomsoever the Lord loveth," says St. Paul, "He chastiseth, and He scourgeth every son He receiveth" (Hebr. 12. 6). We may, therefore, conclude with St. John Chrysostom, that "a sinner who goes unpunished, is the most wretched of mankind."

Crosses and trials are a sign that we are acceptable to God. "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should try thee" (Tob. 13. 12). God sends us sufferings and crosses for our salvation, to purify our souls, to make them fit for the kingdom of the elect. "Take all that shall be brought upon thee," says the Holy Ghost, "and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience, for gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation" (Eccli. 2. 4, 5).

Many a one who has a hundred times deserved hell, complains bitterly of a little cross, of some light suffering. In our sufferings we ought to call to mind, with the good thief, that "we receive the due rewards of our deeds" (Luke 23. 41), and even far less than we deserve. We have merited hell, or at least an extremely long purgatory, and we ought to be glad to get off so cheaply. "If thou truly believest that thou deservest to dwell in hell," says Ven. Louis da Ponte, "thou wilt not complain of the evils thou hast to suffer." "How can he who has deserved hell complain," says St. Alphonsus, "when the Lord sends him a cross?"

Moreover, how do we expect to gain heaven, if not, like Jesus Christ and the saints, by labor and suffering? "To gain heaven," says St. Joseph Calasanctius, "all labor is insignificant." "The sufferings of this life," says St. Paul, "are not worthy of being compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8. 18).

A single moment in heaven deserves to be purchased with the most violent and protracted sufferings on earth. But how grateful we should be to God, since, as St. Paul says, "our present momentary and light tribulation worketh for us an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4.17). Our crosses are seed sown for life everlasting. "No one," says St. Gregory, can "expect a crop, if he has not previously ploughed and cast seed into the ground; in like manner, no one can gather joy in heaven without having previously labored in this life and sown good works amid sorrow and suffering." The greater the sufferings we bear patiently in this life, the greater also shall be our glory in heaven. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation," says St. James (1.2), "for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life." St. Teresa, appearing after her death, to one of her sisters, said to her: "I would willingly endure alone all the sufferings in this world in order that I might be raised one degree higher in heaven and possess the smallest increase in the knowledge of God's greatness." "It is," she says in one of her works, "a happy thing to exchange the light privations of this life for eternal joy and abundance."

But even if we were to obtain no reward whatever for our patience in sufferings and trials, we should cheerfully accept from God the few comparatively light crosses of this life after receiving from God so many priceless benefits. "If we

have received good things from the hands of God," asks holy Job (2. 10), "why should we not receive also evil?" "Since Jesus Christ," says St. Teresa, "has testified His love for us by works and by enduring excruciating torments, how can we expect by mere words to satisfy His love and to correspond to it?"

Three degrees of patience. The first degree is to repress every manifestation of sadness or discontent and to abstain from all complaint about our sufferings. The second consists in repressing all interior feelings of sorrow, sadness or dissatisfaction concerning them and to preserve a calm interior and peace of mind. The third degree consists in rejoicing in sufferings and bearing them cheerfully, as St. Paul did: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations" (2 Cor. 7. 4); "I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distress for Christ" (2 Cor. 12. 10). Divine consolations fill the hearts of such generous souls, so that they may well exclaim with the psalmist: "According to the multitude of sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul" (Ps. 93. 19).

When to practise patience. We should practise patience at all times, says St. Alphonsus, but especially in sickness and sufferings, in adversity, in poverty and want, in contempt and persecution. And also in desolation of spirit, for we should then, like Jesus Christ, have recourse to prayer.

“Being in an agony, He prayed the longer” (Luke 22. 43). At such times we should seek consolation only in God. “Come to Me,” says our divine Saviour, “all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you” (Mat. 11. 28). We ought to practise patience in our temptations; they are necessary to us, for “what doth he know who hath not been tried?” (Eccli. 39. 4). Temptation is an efficient teacher, because more perfectly than other means, it imparts self-knowledge. “Peter, who before his temptation and fall,” says St. Augustine, “was presumptuous, acquired through temptation the knowledge and conviction of his own helplessness.”

Finally, we should be patient in all mishaps, and with ourselves also, whenever we have the misfortune of committing a fault. “If we wish to attain perfection,” says St. Francis de Sales, “we ought to endure, but not love or caress, our want of perfection.”

Let us willingly and cheerfully accept from the hands of God all crosses and sufferings and bear them with patience. To enable us to do so, we should follow St. Paul’s counsel: “Think diligently upon Him, who endured such opposition from sinners against Himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your mind, for you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Hebr. 12. 3). If we wish to be saved, it behooves us to become conformable to our divine Redeemer. “Yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may also

be glorified with Him" (Rom. 8. 17). "How can we expect to be exempt from suffering," says St. Augustine, "if even He that was sinless was not free from it?" "When we consider," says St. Francis de Sales, "the sufferings of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the apostles, we discover that those who loved Jesus Christ the most and were the dearest to Him, were also the most afflicted." But when we suffer with Christ, we should also be patient like Him: "When He was reviled, He did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not" (1 Pet. 2. 23).

Sufferings are necessary to detach us from the world, from this life, which, in spite of its trials, has so many attractions for us, and is so extravagantly loved by worldlings. "O unhappy men," says St. Augustine, "the world, notwithstanding its bitterness, is loved by you; what would it be, were it all sweetness!"

Sufferings are highly advantageous to us, if we bear them patiently for God's sake. "To love God," says St. Clement Mary Hofbauer, "is so great a good, that it cannot be expressed in words; but it is a still greater good to suffer for Him." The saints all bear witness to the fact that sufferings patiently borne for the love of God are a greater good than to reign in heaven. St. John Chrysostom declares that the opportunity of suffering for God is a greater gift than the power of performing miracles, because it renders God Himself our debtor. St. Alphonsus, writing to a re-

ligious who complained of her trials, says: "As to the trials you experience in the convent, I am more pleased than if you wrought miracles and enjoyed ecstasies. Sufferings attach us to Jesus Christ and help us to love God alone. Let us in our pains glance at so many martyrs who patiently and cheerfully endured fearful torments."

In our pains and crosses we should pray for patience, that we may suffer a little for the love of Jesus Christ, who suffered so much for us poor sinners. It would be well if we then reflected earnestly on His passion. "Think frequently on Jesus Christ crucified," says St. Francis de Sales; "consider Him covered with wounds, filled with sadness, despoiled of everything, loaded with insults and curses. You will then acknowledge that your sufferings bear no comparison with His, and that you shall never be able to endure anything in the least approaching what He suffered for you." "Since our divine Saviour," says St. Teresa, "testified His love for us by works and by the most excruciating sufferings, how can we expect, by mere words, to repay His love and to correspond to it? He who thinks on the Redeemer's wounds and recalls the torments He endured, will not dare to complain of his own little trials, for there can be no comparison between our sufferings and His." "How is it possible for him who loves God," exclaims St. Alphonsus, "to look at the crucifix, and behold a God dying in an ocean of sorrows and insults, and not bear his own light

sufferings cheerfully, or even not to desire to suffer every pain for His sake!" If Jesus Christ Himself, as He said to the two disciples going to Emmaus (Luke 24. 26), could not enter glory without previous suffering, we should conclude with St. Paul, "that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14. 21).

28. ANGER. (G)

“Be angry, and sin not” (Ps. 4. 5).

Anger is two-fold, lawful and unlawful. Lawful anger is inspired by zeal for the honor of God. Holy Scripture gives us a number of examples of this, for instance: Moses throwing down the stone tables of the Law, when he beheld the idolatry of the Israelites; Phineas killing the Israelite and the Madianite woman, and then putting himself at the head of the faithful to slay the transgressors of the divine commands; Elias causing the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal to be put to death, and calling down fire from heaven to consume the soldiers who had come to arrest him; Mathathias springing on the altar and killing an Israelite who was about to offer sacrifice to an idol, lest the people should be led into idolatry by his example; St. Peter causing Ananias and Sapphira to drop down dead on account of their prevarication, and excommunicating Simon the magician for endeavoring to purchase with gold the gifts of the Holy Ghost; St. John Baptist calling the pharisees “a race of vipers”; and finally we have the example of our divine Saviour Himself, who, though He was meekness itself, did not fail sharply to reprove the pharisees on several

occasions, and to drive the buyers and venders out of the temple! Such anger is lawful, for it is the effect of pure zeal for God's honor and glory. But the anger that is prompted by passion, or its effect, is unlawful and sinful. "Anger arising from zeal," says St. Gregory, "is virtuous, but the anger arising from passion is sinful."

The causes of anger. 1. In the first place, anger is the outcome of our natural inclinations, or temperament. The choleric has, from nature, a propensity to anger; the melancholic, to sadness; the sanguinic, to lust; and the phlegmatic, to sloth. Unremitting efforts on our part, assisted by divine grace, can alone enable us to overcome our temperament. The fiercer the struggle, the greater also the merit.

2. Anger proceeds, in the second place, from habit. The passion of anger makes its appearance already in infancy, and if not at once checked, it soon takes deep root. The little cherished idol of fond parents is spoiled in infancy, bears the fruit of irascibility in youth, and takes deeper and deeper root with the progress of years, until it can no longer be rooted out.

3. Thirdly, anger frequently arises from inordinate self-love, from pride, from lust, from self-will, from unrestrained ambition. Under the influence of any of these passions, or vices, a man brooks no restraint, no opposition, no contradiction and becomes uncontrollably sensitive. Fre-

quently excessive, inordinate love is turned into the most violent hatred. This is an evident proof that such love was not in accordance with Christian charity.

Effects of anger. 1. "Anger," says St. Gregory, "makes the heart beat and the body tremble; it is apt either to tie up the tongue altogether, or to loosen it beyond measure. It reddens the face, gives a wild and fierce expression to the eyes, disfigures the countenance, and makes a person appear as if bereft of his senses and renders him sometimes even unconscious of what he is saying or doing." Anger often causes fever from excitement, exhausts the vital energy, brings on diseases of the brain, heart failure and sudden death.

2. It destroys peace of mind by disturbing and darkening it, renders a person blind to his interests, both spiritual and temporal, and not unfrequently leads to insanity, and, in religious, to the loss of vocation.

3. Our anger is injurious to our neighbor also, for it causes us to irritate and provoke him by our harsh and offensive language, and even to wound deeply the feelings of our best and most devoted friends. Anger often results in bitter disputes and quarrels, in spite and hatred, in deadly enmities, in fights and even in the most shocking murders!

4. Anger is a sin more or less grievous according to its degree, intensity and evil effects. How

often is it not the cause of fearful imprecations, curses, oaths, blasphemies, and numberless other sins! A person who keeps anger and hatred in his heart usually omits prayer altogether, the reception of the sacraments and all his religious duties for even many years! Religious who yield to anger in the presence of seculars, moreover, are guilty of scandal!

Remedies of Anger. 1. We should constantly watch over ourselves, lest we be surprised by the emotions of anger and passion. Moreover, it behooves us to repress at once such emotions; otherwise they may soon acquire such strength as to be naturally beyond our control.

2. Since without the assistance of divine grace we are powerless to master our emotions, we must constantly have recourse to prayer, especially when feelings of anger arise within us, and even when we foresee that an occasion exciting us to anger is likely to arise. We should continue to pray for patience as long as we feel irritated.

3. We should make earnest efforts to subdue our irascibility. However great the provocation, how deeply soever our feelings may have been hurt, we should heed the counsel of St. Paul: "Let not the sun go down on your anger" (Eph. 4. 26). If we are naturally much inclined to get angry, we should make our particular examen on this point, and inflict some severe penance on ourselves every time we yield to anger. It would be also well if we could get a kind fellow-religious to admonish

us, in some manner, whenever he perceives that we are inclined to get angry, in danger of losing our temper. If we cannot completely extirpate this passion, let us, at least, clip it short whenever it crops out a little. We ought, in the spiritual life to imitate the careful gardener, who daily examines his garden and pulls out all the weeds he finds.

4. To mitigate our anger, we should follow the example of St. Francis de Sales. "I have made a compact with my tongue," he says, "never to speak, and with myself never to act, so long as my heart is disturbed." We should defer speaking or replying (and, if we are superiors, reproofing and correcting) until our passion has cooled down. "When some one speaks harshly to us," says St. Alphonsus, "we should invariably give him a gentle reply; but if we are angry, we must remain silent."

5. To acquire the mastery over our temper and feelings, we should tear out of our heart every affection that is not based on God, and consider ourselves as the worst and meanest of sinners, and as deserving only of contempt and ill-treatment on the part of all mankind. By this means we shall not so easily feel hurt by what others may say or do to us.

6. In fine, we ought to be guided by the light of faith and consider all the crosses, trials and humiliations that proceed from our fellow-men, as directly sent to us by our most loving God. "When

thou meetest with a cross or a humiliation," says St. Alphonsus, "do not seek to know who is the cause of it," but cheerfully accept it as coming directly from the hands of God Himself, and as a means of acquiring great merit. Let us imitate our divine Redeemer by practising forbearance, patience and meekness towards all men, whatever may be their conduct in our regard. "When we consider," says St. Teresa, "the countless injuries offered to our Redeemer and the saints, we should blush with shame at being so sensitive and revengeful."

29. MEEKNESS. (G)

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land” (Mat. 5. 4).

The virtue of meekness is indispensable to all, but more especially to those who live in communities and labor for souls. It greatly promotes fraternal charity, and true charity can never be without it. It either prevents anger from arising within us when we receive injuries or our feelings are hurt; or, if our anger is already aroused, it enables us to overcome and stifle it, and strengthens our heart to endure sufferings and ill-treatment calmly. He who is meek speaks in a kind and friendly manner to those who contradict, oppose, insult, attack and even strike him, and is always ready to return good for evil, to pray for and forgive his enemies from his heart, and even endeavors to forget the wrongs he has suffered from them. Meekness produces in him on all such occasions an interior calm which nothing can disturb or take away. “Meekness,” says St. Thomas, “is the virtue which governs anger according to right reason. Anger disturbs our reason, but meekness overcomes such disturbance and thus prevents all its evil consequences.”

Meekness is truly a divine virtue. Although

God hates and detests sin, nothing can ever disturb Him or excite Him to anger, for He is not subject to passion. The passages in Scripture mentioning His anger and wrath against sin and sinners, must be understood as the effects of His infinite justice, and not as an indication that God is or can be the subject of any passion whatever, for He is infinitely perfect and immutable. Our divine Saviour practised meekness most perfectly, and prescribed it to all mankind before every other virtue, even before humility, for He said: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Mat. 11. 29). It renders those who possess it godlike. "Meekness, more than the other virtues," says St. John Chrysostom, "renders us like unto God," for those who are meek have a perfect mastery over their passions and are immovable, imperturbable.

Meekness is a glorious virtue, for it can be practised only through supernatural motives, and presupposes perfect self-mastery and self-denial. It is so great a virtue as to be even more rare than perfect chastity. "Great evenness of temper," says St. Francis de Sales, "constant gentleness and suavity of heart, although more rare than chastity, are yet most desirable." The meek are placid and immovable in storms, impassible amid blows, insults and wounds, and, like our divine Saviour and St. Stephen, they die praying for and invoking blessings upon their persecutors and murderers.

Meekness requires a great fund of self-restraint, of self-control, of prudence and courage, of ardent love of God and humility, of mercy and forbearance towards our neighbor and sincere love for our enemies. It is the most beautiful ornament of the other virtues, for, according to St. Francis de Sales, it is the very cream, the best part of charity, the greatest of the virtues. Meekness adorns the superior, and is greatly becoming in the subject.

It behooves us to practise it in imitation of our divine Saviour, who expressly commands us to learn it from Him. And indeed we cannot be His true disciples, without endeavoring to resemble Him who was so meek, as to be compared by the prophet to a lamb led to the slaughter, that opens not its mouth. "When we consider the countless injuries offered our divine Redeemer and the saints," says St. Teresa, "we should blush with shame for being so sensitive and revengeful."

The virtue of meekness produces most beneficial results in this life. It promotes peace of mind by not allowing anything to disturb us. By restraining our sensitiveness, impulsiveness and anger, it wards off from us many troubles and misfortunes. "Sometimes," says St. Vincent de Paul, "a single kind word suffices to appease an infuriated person; whereas a single harsh word is capable of carrying desolation into a soul and of arousing a bitter feeling that may cause great injury." "Since it is impossible," says St. Francis de Sales,

“to avoid during our earthly pilgrimage certain differences and disputes, we need a large fund of patience and meekness to oppose and suppress the sudden emotions of anger, in order to preserve peace of heart.”

The meek are favorites everywhere, for they can get along with every one. “As without faith it is impossible to please God,” says St. Bernard, “so also without meekness it is impossible to please men.” Meekness enables us to control our temper, and to gain thereby great ascendancy and influence over our fellow-men. Why was Moses able to lead the immense multitude of fiery and unruly Israelites through the wilderness for forty years? He was, says Holy Scripture, the meekest of men (Num. 12.3). Experience testifies that the want of meekness in those possessed of authority over others, or laboring for souls, renders their labors almost fruitless, whilst its possession enables them to exert an almost boundless influence over their subjects. “The natural character of men,” says St. Francis de Sales, “is such that, when harshly treated, it becomes, like clay in the fire, still more hardened, whereas it is soon softened by meekness.”

This is beautifully illustrated in the fable of the wind and the sun. Each of them claimed to possess the greater power. To settle the dispute, they both agreed to test their power on a pedestrian, who wore a cloak, by trying to compel him to take it off. It was in March. The blustering

wind was the first to try its power. But it was a cold, piercing wind, and the fiercer it blew, the more tightly did the man wrap his cloak around him. The wind, after having in vain exhausted all its strength, at last ceased, admitting it could do no more. The sun, until then concealed by a cloud, now came forth and by his gentle warmth soon rendered the cloak unnecessary, and the man took it off. In like manner, harshness, like a cold, piercing North wind, will cause men only to cling more stubbornly to their views, and to resent opposition, admonition, correction and whatever is disagreeable or interferes with their pleasure or comfort. But meekness, like the genial sun in March, removes all prejudices, and favorably disposes men's hearts to the impressions of grace and virtue. Hence we need not be astonished at the success that accompanies the labors of the meek.

The meek will reap an abundant reward. Since each one's reward is in proportion to the acts of virtue which he performs, and the occasions in the community life of performing acts of meekness are daily numerous, the meek religious lay up an immense treasure of merit in heaven. Moreover, as a man's holiness is proportionate to his conformity with Jesus, his Model, and as our divine Saviour requires us, in a special manner and first of all, to imitate His meekness, it follows that the meek are assured of an exceedingly great reward in heaven.

30. IDLE CURIOSITY. (G)

Curiosity is a disposition to inquire after knowledge, to investigate, to discover hidden or unknown things. There is a laudable curiosity, which is the principle of science. It impels us to learn our duties and to find out the means of performing them well. But there is also a reprehensible curiosity, an idle curiosity, which induces us to inquire after what does not concern us, to learn what is not useful, what may prove dangerous or hurtful to us.

Idle or vain curiosity is a very general vice. It is so much the more deplorable, because but few only scruple it, although it is productive of great injury, especially in the spiritual life. It dissipates the mind, fills it with vain and useless thoughts and prevents application to serious matters. It occasions much uneasiness, divides the heart, agitates and worries the mind, leaves a void in our interior, deprives us of all attention to and relish for spiritual things, and of unction in our prayers and other spiritual exercises. It is a great obstacle to an interior life, to recollection of mind and mental prayer, and, consequently, to perfection and even to salvation. Moreover, it is apt to be contagious, and, therefore, disedifying, and not unfrequently even scandalous.

Its causes. 1. Idleness is its first cause. He who is constantly busy with something useful, has not the time or opportunity to inquire after what does not concern him.

2. Talkativeness is another cause. Talkativeness, like the itch, leaves one no rest until it is satisfied; and the more one speaks, the more he wishes to speak. But of what can great talkers speak? To talk much, they must know many things; and to know many things, they must use the means of finding them out. Wherefore great talkers are usually very curious and inquisitive; they love the world and worldly conversation, or idle gossip, so as to have matter to gratify their loquacity.

3. Vanity is another source of curiosity, for it likes to parade its knowledge, in order to appear well-posted on all current topics, and decide all questions with the tone of one whose knowledge cannot be questioned.

4. Another fruitful source of curiosity is malignity, which induces us to take delight in all that is disadvantageous to our neighbor. We endeavor to discover the shortcomings of others, that we may be able to make them known and to inspire a bad opinion of them among our companions, acquaintances, etc. Consequently, we are always watching others closely, inquiring after them and their doings, keeping our eyes wide open to see their every fault, and our ears attentive to hear of their weaknesses. In all this we fail greatly

against due discretion, modesty and charity. We pry into everything, search the papers, catechise the servants, etc. We flatter certain persons and insinuate ourselves into the friendship of others, with the intention of extorting from them, in an unguarded moment, their personal secrets, that we may afterwards divulge them. We become mean tale-bearers between parties, in order to stir up dissensions among them, and to gratify our vain and malignant curiosity. And how contented do we feel when we know and disclose disparaging matters about others, and are able to sow discord between superiors and subjects, between fellow-religious, and even between outsiders! We like to fish in troubled waters, for we are generally rewarded with a fine catch, and are well stocked with a long litany of subjects to ventilate our knowledge in future conversations!

Its effects. Idle or vain curiosity was, in a great measure, the cause of Eve's fall, for she liked to see everything and to hear what the serpent had to say, and to find out if what the serpent said was true, and to know as much as God. In convents idle curiosity is destructive of the prescribed silence, of recollection, peace of mind, the regular observance, the spirit of prayer, of obedience, charity, mutual harmony and concord. Curious religious are a pest in a community and a scandal to outsiders. They hold nothing sacred, whether it concerns the reputation of an individual member or that of the whole community.

They meddle with the business of their companions, and with the rights and duties of superiors. Although blind to their own manifold shortcomings, they know well the faults of every member of the community, and even of seculars and of the clergy, and they censure all without restraint.

A teaching religious, a missionary, who is addicted to idle curiosity, knows more in three or four days about the parish, than the pastor who has had charge of it for ten or more years! And there is perhaps no end to his criticism, to his fault-finding! Such religious usually draw upon their Institute the odium of the clergy and the people!

Its remedies. 1. He who has this defect should make his particular examen on it, that he may be able, with the assistance of divine grace, to overcome it. 2. He should avoid all idle gossip, all purely worldly conversations, all criticism, fault-finding and detraction. 3. In the third place, he should always be profitably employed. Fourthly, he should mind himself, his own faults, watch over his eyes, and keep his ears closed to all detraction. "Watch over thyself," says the Imitation, "stir thyself, admonish thyself, and whatever others may do, do not neglect thyself." 5. He should read and meditate on the third Chapter of the Epistle of St. James. 6. He should frequently renew the good intention and strive to acquire the habit of walking in the presence of God.

31. GOD'S GIFTS TO US, AND OUR GIFTS TO GOD. (G)

Benefits generally possess great influence. The greater and the more numerous are the benefits we receive, the more obliged do we feel to the giver, the more disposed we are to please him and to avoid whatever may cause him pain or displeasure.

I. *God's benefits towards us* are inestimable, and bestowed most liberally upon us; and yet we seldom reflect thereon or think of showing Him our gratitude. To Him we owe all that we are and all that we have, both in the natural order and in the order of grace.

1. In the first place, we owe Him the benefit of the creation. He called us into existence in preference to countless possible beings. He gave us our whole being: our soul with its faculties and their use; our body with its senses and their use. For many years He has kept us alive, in good health, whilst so many of our companions are already dead, or a prey to various diseases and afflictions.

2. God called us, without any merit of ours, to the true faith in preference to so many millions of heretics, heathens, etc. Without this most precious of gifts, all other gifts would avail us but little.

3. God gave us good and religious parents, who brought us up in the fear of God, in the knowledge and practice of our holy religion, whilst so many children, even of Catholics, are deprived of all religious training through their parents' carelessness and indifference.

4. God, in the past, preserved us from numberless spiritual and corporal dangers. How providentially did He not withdraw us from dangerous occasions, from the company or influence of wicked companions, whereby our innocence, and perhaps our faith also, would have suffered shipwreck. Where are now so many of our schoolmates and companions? How many of them, less favored than we, have become the victims of human respect, the slaves of some evil passion, such as drunkenness or impurity, and have perhaps been thereby brought to an early grave, carried away by a sudden death, and are now in hell for all eternity!

5. The same sad fate would, most probably, have been ours also, had not God, in His infinite goodness and mercy, bestowed upon us the greatest of benefits, next to that of the true faith, that of a religious vocation! From our very infancy, we may say, and without any merit on our part, and notwithstanding all our shortcomings, God took us by the hand, as it were, filled us with disgust and aversion for the world, its goods and pleasures, and led us apart from it and its dangers, troubles and cares, into a land flowing

with milk and honey, where everything is calculated to render life sweet, peaceful and happy, and where we are espoused to the King of glory. And God has left our former companions, many of whom were far more worthy than we, to battle with a wicked world and to struggle constantly amid its dangers and hardships.

6. Who can count the many graces and favors God has unceasingly bestowed upon us since our entrance into religion, notwithstanding our neglect of correspondence therewith, our tepidity, our indifference, our ingratitude? How numerous and powerful are not the means of salvation and perfection at our disposal in the convent! How numerous and efficient the means to ward off and overcome danger, to sweeten our little crosses and trials and to acquire daily immense treasures of merit for eternity! Had we always faithfully corresponded with these benefits, we should now be saints!

7. God so loved us as to give us His only begotten Son, equal to Himself, whom He loves with an infinite and eternal love. In giving Him to us, He gave us what He had most precious!

8. And Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has given Himself unreservedly to us. "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave," says St. Paul. He became man and entered this world as a helpless infant, not out of love of the angels, but out of love of us sinners. It was for our sake that He was born in a stable, laid in a manger, shivering

with cold and shedding tears. It was for our sake that, for thirty years He led a life of obscurity, poverty, hardships and humble submission. It was for us that He fasted forty days and forty nights and prayed; that for three years He traveled from place to place, preaching the Gospel, enduring countless contradictions, humiliations and persecutions, and that He died amid fearful torments the most disgraceful of deaths, His very name and memory a curse for our sake. We might suppose that, after doing all this, He could do no more for us, since "greater love than this no man hath than to lay down His life for his friends." But His love for us was not yet exhausted; He had a still greater gift in reserve for us, for He gave us the Blessed Eucharist, the mystery of faith and love, the pledge of life everlasting, in which He personally remains constantly with us and feeds us with His very flesh and blood. So great is this gift, that, although He is almighty and there are no bounds to His power, yet He cannot bestow on us a greater gift than the Blessed Eucharist, for after giving us His own self, He has nothing greater to give us.

It is this God, who is infinitely good in Himself and infinitely good towards us, who, without either claim or merit on our part, has chosen us for Himself, and has espoused our soul, so that we may truly say: "The Lord is my portion, my inheritance, my Spouse forever! My Beloved is all mine;" but can we truly say: "and I am all

His''? This is, indeed, what He asks of us, saying: "My son, give Me thy heart" (Prov. 23. 26).

We have, it is true, consecrated ourselves to God by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience at our profession. We should, therefore, belong to Him wholly and unreservedly. He loves us with infinite love. What return can we make to our divine Saviour for Himself, unless we give Him ourselves wholly and unreservedly? How unbecoming and ungrateful for us to divide our heart among miserable creatures, and to offer to God merely the crumbs, the dregs! Were we possessed of the universe and gave it all to Him, we could not even then sufficiently repay His bounty towards us. Since He, the God of infinite perfection, does not consider it too much to bestow Himself wholly upon us, how can we consider it too much to give ourselves wholly to Him?

II. *How insignificant are the gifts we are able to give to God!* 1. In fact, when we give ourselves unreservedly to God, our gift is insignificant indeed and hardly fit to be offered to the infinitely perfect God, for, in the first place, in offering to God our whole being, we offer Him but little indeed, for we are in ourselves so mean, vile and insignificant, so weak and helpless, and are able to do so little.

2. In offering to God all our works, we offer Him but little indeed, for even our best and the greatest works are in themselves so insignificant and so imperfect in His sight, that they may be

reckoned as almost worthless, and whatever merit they possess is the result of the graces He confers on us.

3. God does so much for us; His daily benefits to us are of infinite value; whilst, on our side, we do so little for God, and this little we often perform so grudgingly, so carelessly; and we endeavor to diminish it whenever we can, and even to omit it altogether.

4. Let us compare, not the good we actually perform, but rather the good we *pretend* to do for God, with the evil we actually commit, with our manifold past sins, which have so greatly offended God, and we shall find that the latter far outweighs the former.

5. Let us, in like manner, compare the slight efforts we make in God's service, with the earnest labor and great exertions of worldlings to earn a living, to acquire learning, wealth or fame, to enjoy life and its pleasures, and we shall be astonished at the insignificance of our efforts.

6. Let us compare our labors, our sufferings and sacrifices in the service of God with those of the saints, and we shall have every reason to be filled with confusion, for in this there is an immense distance between us and the saints.

7. Let us compare all we do for God and for our sanctification with what we cheerfully do, or are ready to do, in order to promote some selfish design, or to please mere creatures! What a shame it is for a religious consecrated to Jesus

Christ, that he should labor more earnestly and make greater sacrifices for a temporal object, for instance for his health, or to become popular, than he does or is willing to do for the glory of God and his own spiritual welfare!

8. Let us also compare our efforts and our sacrifices with the reward that is promised us, with the crown that is destined for us, and we shall be convinced that we are greatly wanting in gratitude towards God and in earnestness for our spiritual welfare!

It is now evident that we can give but little to God, and that, far from doing all we can for Him, we scarcely perform an insignificant part of what He has the right to demand of us, and of what gratitude should prompt us to offer to Him in return for His priceless benefits. Let us henceforth strive to be generous and no longer withhold from our greatest Benefactor and Lover what it is in our power to offer Him. Let us, who can give so little, give to God *all* that we can. Let us show our gratitude to God for His inexhaustible bounty, and bestow on Him at least the little we are able to do together with the sincere desire of doing much more. Let us devote to Him all our time, all our thoughts and desires, all our talents, all our affections and all our love, all our words and deeds, and cheerfully accept and bear every cross, trial and suffering He sends us, and let us never murmur or complain about the sacrifices He may demand of us.

32. NEGLIGENCE IN LITTLE THINGS AND LOSS OF TIME. (G)

1. Negligence in little things in the practice of virtue is a great obstacle to perfection. In the service of God there is nothing really little or unimportant. An act, however insignificant it may be in itself, from the moment it becomes connected with the service of God through the Rule or the command of the superior, is ennobled and is endowed with far greater importance and merit than the most important of worldly affairs.

There can be no lawful excuse for neglecting to perform the little acts of virtue duty imposes upon us. They are all easy and require but little effort or exertion on our part. If God were directly, or indirectly through obedience, to prescribe to us great and difficult things, we should perform them at any cost. How much more should we be willing to perform what is light and easy!

2. Negligence in little things concerning the avoidance of sin is also a great obstacle to perfection. The smallest sin or fault offends God, and should, therefore, be more carefully shunned than even the greatest physical evil. We should not, even to gain the whole universe or to procure the salvation of all mankind, commit even the smallest venial sin. What ought to put an end to

our sloth or indifference in this matter, is the fact that every deliberate venial sin, when it has become a habit, may easily lead us into tepidity, that most dangerous of spiritual diseases, and thence almost imperceptibly into mortal sin. "He that contemneth small things," says the Holy Ghost, "shall fall by little and little" (Eccli. 19. 1). "He that is unjust in that which is least," says our divine Saviour, "is unjust also in that which is greater" (Luke 16. 11).

3. It behooves us to be faithful in the use of our time. We who are bound by our state to strive after perfection, should be very conscientious in making a good use of the short span of life which the Almighty has allotted to us. Therefore, says St. Paul, "whilst we have time, let us do good" (Gal. 6. 10). Nothing is more precious than time, for it is the price of eternity. He who employs his time well secures an eternity of happiness; but he who abuses, misuses his time, purchases for himself an eternity of misery and woe! Every one will receive from God in eternity according to the use he makes of his time. Let us bear in mind that time is given to us solely for our salvation. It is therefore our most important duty to devote every moment of our time to our eternal salvation. God has given us our time that we may use it all in His service and for His glory. He who makes a bad use of his time is like the workman who defrauds his employer by wasting his time and neglecting his work.

4. The loss of time is a great and irreparable evil, for the time lost can never be regained or recovered. Once gone, it is forever gone, no more to be recalled! Had we well employed all our time since our entrance into religion, how rich should we not already be! Time may be lost in different ways. Some religious discharge their obligations in a hurry, that they may have more time, and this time they often devote to some amusement, to worldly matters, or to mere trifles. He loses his time who does not properly perform his duties. Some religious are always very busy, for the purpose not so much of pleasing God or advancing in perfection, as of gratifying their natural activity, or their desire of doing more than others. He loses his time who performs his actions carelessly, or through human or selfish motives, because his time is not profitable for his progress in virtue.

He employs his time well, who, in the first place, discharges his duties faithfully, punctually and to the best of his ability; in the second place, if, after properly discharging all his duties, he usefully employs all the remaining time and shuns sloth as the parent of tepidity and vice. In the third place, to employ our time well, it is not sufficient that our actions should be good or holy in themselves, they should be good and holy in all their circumstances, that is, they should be in accordance with the rule and obedience, be well performed, be free from all selfish and human

motives and be animated with a good intention.

We ought frequently to examine ourselves as to the use we make of our time. How much of our precious time have we not hitherto lost or mis-spent? Were we to die now, how empty-handed, how destitute of merits would we not be? And for what reasons? Let us resolve henceforth to do better and try to remedy the past. Although we cannot, strictly speaking, recall the time that is past, we can, nevertheless, in a certain way, make up for it, for time is, in some manner, redeemable, according to St. Paul's admonition: "Redeem time" (Eph. 5. 16). The laborers who went to work only at the eleventh hour, received the same wages as those who had come earlier, because they displayed greater fervor and energy in their work. By imitating their example we shall soon be able to make up for a great part of the time we have already lost, and we may still become great saints.

Let us sincerely thank God for the time He has given us, and let us profit by the precious time that remains to us, for it is short, and delay is dangerous. "Walk whilst you have light," says our divine Saviour (John 12. 35), for "the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9. 4).

33. REFUSE NOTHING TO GOD. (G)

1. We should refuse nothing to God, and be always ready to make any sacrifice whatever, in order to please Him. As religious we should belong unreservedly to Him and have in our heart no affection, no love except for Him and for His sake. If, besides God, we love creatures, that is, if we do not love them wholly for His sake, we do not love Him as we should with our whole heart. Our attachment to a creature may be insignificant in itself, but in its effects it is something very serious, for it is an obstacle to our progress in virtue and perfection, in union with God. The smallest thread suffices to prevent a bird from soaring on high. In like manner, the smallest attachment to a creature is an obstacle to union with God. Our vocation requires that we leave all things for God's sake, that He should be our treasure, our all, and that we should, therefore, be satisfied with Him alone. And is not God sufficient to fill up and absorb all the love of that little heart of ours? In possessing Him do we not possess all things? And if we truly possess Him, what more is there for us to desire?

2. Attachment to our own selves is a still greater obstacle to our perfection, for it is more

dangerous and more difficult to remove. In the first place, our self-love renders us blind to our own faults, by either preventing us from noticing them, or by so greatly diminishing their number and malice, as to make them appear insignificant just as large objects appear diminutive and far away when seen through the wrong end of a spy-glass. In the second place, attachment to ourselves is the obstacle it behooves us above all to remove, because we cannot find God until we have left ourselves. Self-denial is indispensable to our progress in virtue. It is the first thing our divine Saviour requires from all who wish to be His disciples and lead a virtuous life. Thirdly, self-denial must be practised chiefly in reference to our predominant passion. Every one has a favorite or predominant passion, which is the source of the majority of his faults, defects and shortcomings. Perfection cannot be attained until the predominant passion has been crushed or rooted out. This is a very difficult and protracted task, costing much and constant labor. It is also very disagreeable and painful to our poor nature. We should, however, beware of shirking this most necessary duty, or of seeking pretexts for neglecting or deferring it. As long as our favorite passion remains standing or retains possession of our heart, we shall meet with but little success in our efforts to correct our other defects. We should direct all our efforts in our meditations, holy Communions, examinations of conscience,

etc., against it, and pray for light, grace and strength to extirpate it, and say to God: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready."

3. God grants everything to those who refuse nothing to Him, and who, for His sake, generously make every sacrifice, for He never allows Himself to be surpassed in generosity, and always repays a thousandfold whatever we do for His sake. This easily accounts for the wonderful efficacy of the prayers of the saints. It should be our most earnest desire to please God in all things; but our desire should be effective, that is, we should act in conformity with it and make it the rule of our conduct. He who sincerely loves God above all things, omits nothing that will prove pleasing to Him. We are accustomed to study the inclinations and aversions, the likes and dislikes of those we love, so as to find therein a guide in our conduct towards them. We leave nothing undone to gratify them, we look upon trifles as matters of importance, whenever there is question of affording pleasure to those we love. When there is question of pleasing his beloved, or of avoiding giving offense to his beloved, the lover finds nothing difficult, disagreeable or below his dignity. We should, therefore, shrink from no labor, no hardships, no sacrifice, when there is question of pleasing or of avoiding what displeases God, who deserves all our love, all our sacrifices!

In the spiritual life, however, we possess incal-

culable advantages over worldlings. How great soever the pains they take, they are not always sure of pleasing the person they love or of avoiding what may be displeasing or give offense to the same. But when we do our best, however unsatisfactory to ourselves the result of our efforts, we are always sure of pleasing God, for He is satisfied with our good will, with our earnest efforts, since He sees our heart, our good will. We please Him whenever we do our best.

We ought to dread nothing more than to displease God. If we sincerely love Him, we will carefully refrain from everything displeasing to Him, from everything, if I may so speak, that may pain Him. The saints preferred to undergo every suffering, to make every sacrifice, rather than displease God in the least. Were our love of God as sincere, as ardent as theirs, we would be animated with the same sentiments.

4. We should seek God in all our actions; and if we thus seek Him, we shall surely find Him. We ought never to lose sight of our misery, inconstancy and weakness, and, therefore, we should place no reliance on ourselves, for, of ourselves, we are so powerless, that we cannot have even a good thought without the grace of God. "Without Me," says our divine Saviour, "you can do nothing" (John 15. 5). We should, then, wholly mistrust ourselves and place all our trust in God alone. If, like St. Paul, we mistrust ourselves and rely on God alone, we shall, like him, be power-

ful in our weakness, for God effects great things only by means of weak instruments who mistrust themselves and confide wholly in Him. Our helplessness in the spiritual life, far from discouraging us, should urge us to trust in God only who is infinite goodness, our Good Shepherd, our most loving Father, our most generous Benefactor, who knows all our wants and who is never wanting to them who put all their trust in Him.

It is a sure sign that we place all our trust in God, if we unreservedly surrender ourselves to His guidance, especially in the person of our superiors, who hold His place in our regard. Experience proves that those who do so from their whole heart, however weak they are of themselves, are able to effect greater things for His glory than the great and the able who do not wholly surrender themselves to His guidance. This surrender should extend to all things without exception, even when the reasons for doing so are not clear to us, or are opposed to our own inclinations or private views.

1. We ought *in all things* to submit to the divine will or guidance, because, under the circumstances, God always does what is *best in itself*, "disposing all things mightily and sweetly," (Wisd. 8.1). We have a most beautiful illustration of this in the life of Joseph, who from slavery and imprisonment was promoted to be the prime-minister of the king of Egypt and to effect incalculable good.

2. God also does what is *the best for each one of us*. He takes us, as the prophet observes, by the hand and leads us Himself. The very crosses and trials He sends us are necessary for us and conduce to our real welfare. If our self-love is well regulated and genuine, we will cheerfully and gratefully accept and bear all sufferings and crosses, and this most willingly and in all confidence in God's guidance, for it will not lead us astray, but to everlasting happiness.

34. MENTAL PRAYER. (G)

Prayer is absolutely necessary for salvation, both as a precept and as a means. Our divine Saviour enjoins us to pray always and promises to grant us all we pray for. It is also the ordinary and universal means of obtaining divine grace. Divine grace is absolutely necessary for performing any supernatural good work whatever, for practising virtue, for overcoming temptation. Prayer is, moreover, easy, since it is always and everywhere in the power of every man. Prayer is also most efficacious, for God neither does nor can refuse anything to sincere and persistent prayer.

Prayer is even more necessary for religious than for seculars, because religious, being called to a higher perfection than seculars, require greater and more abundant graces. Religious should be men of prayer; their life should even be an uninterrupted prayer. We should, therefore, love prayer and devote to it all the time we can. We should especially practise mental prayer; in fact, we cannot do without it; it is for us a necessary means of acquiring perfection.

Mental prayer enables us to become thoroughly penetrated with the truths and mysteries of re-

ligion, for it is in mental prayer that we reflect earnestly on them, consider them in their various bearings on ourselves and our conduct, and strive to conform our life to them.

Mental prayer, by raising our thoughts to heavenly things, elevates us, as it were, above this material world. It is the channel through which God imparts great supernatural light, for in it we are in the school of God who becomes Himself our teacher.

Mental prayer ignites the fire of fervor in our will, for it discloses the goodness of God towards us, our ingratitude towards God, inspires us with confidence in His goodness and in His assistance, and points out to us the means of correcting our defects, of making progress in perfection and deters us from doing anything that would endanger it.

Mental prayer unites our mind with God, for we converse therein with God familiarly and confidentially. It unites our will with His, for not only does it enlighten us concerning our obligations, but it also imparts to us the strength never to deviate from them. Moreover, it fills us with divine love, for it clearly discloses God to us as the infinite Goodness and our final end.

We religious who daily make mental prayer, ought to lead a holy life, and in fact, ought to be already very holy. But why are we yet so backward in the way of perfection? Why are we now perhaps as imperfect, as full of faults as we were

at the beginning of our religious life? Is it not because we make our meditations carelessly? Do we not fail to exert ourselves to keep recollected during meditation, or neglect to make a practical application of it to ourselves and to conform our conduct to its teachings? Or are our resolutions inappropriate to our wants? Do we not perhaps make very good resolutions, but afterwards fail to carry them out?

The reason why some religious are so slothful and careless in everything connected with mental prayer, is because they do not properly prepare for it. "Before prayer," says the Holy Ghost, "prepare thy soul, and be not as a man tempting God" (Eccli. 18. 23). There are two preparations for mental prayer, the remote and the proximate. We all know in what each of them consists. Usually the greatest stress is laid on the proximate preparation, just as if it were not only the more important, but also as if it alone was sufficient to insure a good meditation. But if we examine them closely, we shall find that the remote preparation is more important and also more indispensable than the proximate, for, if we do not habitually practise the remote, the proximate preparation will be difficult, unsatisfactory and unable to secure our attention and recollection during the whole meditation. He who is habitually dissipated in mind needs more than a brief proximate preparation to keep recollected during the whole time allotted to meditation.

The remote preparation for mental prayer consists in *the habit of recollection* and of *walking in the presence of God*. This is one of the most important and useful exercises of the religious life. It makes us watchful over ourselves; it preserves us from forming attachments to creatures, and from the habit of venial sin. Moreover, it enables us to converse constantly, as it were, with God, and to pray without ceasing. This exercise consists, first, in frequently considering God as everywhere present, in placing our confidence in His goodness and in making the good intention of pleasing Him; and secondly, in the frequent consideration of ourselves, in watching over our thoughts and emotions, in restraining our impetuosity and stirring up our sloth.

To acquire the spirit of recollection, we should endeavor to walk in the presence of God. This walking in the presence of God is founded on two principles of faith: that God is everywhere, and that He sees and knows all things.

Every place is holy, for God is there, and we may apply to it the words of Jacob: "The Lord is indeed in this place, and I knew it not" (Gen. 28. 16). St. Augustine represents God as an immense and boundless ocean in which we all live, by which we are all permeated, for St. Paul says: "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts. 17. 28).

God sees all things and nothing can be hidden from His eyes. How beautifully does the psalmist

express this truth! "Lord, Thou hast proved me and known me; Thou hast known my sitting down and my rising up. Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off; my path and my line Thou hast searched out, and Thou hast foreseen all my ways. . . . Behold, O Lord, Thou hast known all things, the last and those of old. Thou hast formed me and laid Thy hand upon me. Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me; it is high, and I cannot reach it. Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art there. If I take wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there will also Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand will hold me. And I said: Perhaps darkness will cover me, and night will be my light in my pleasures. But darkness shall not be dark to Thee, and night shall be light as day; the darkness thereof and the light thereof are alike to Thee" (Ps. 138. 1-12).

Walking in the presence of God is a sovereign preservative against sin. How powerful in time of temptation, in the excitement and violence of our passions, is not the thought: "I am in the presence of my Judge!" We sin because we lose sight of God!

Walking in the presence of God is a short cut to perfection. "Walk before Me," said God to Abraham, "and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17.1). Perfection consists in the punctual and fervent

performance of our actions. But nothing conduces more to fervor than the thought of God's presence. How well a man works who is constantly under the eyes of his employer! How well a soldier fights who is constantly under the eye of the commander-in-chief!

The thought of God's presence everywhere and that He sees and knows all things is a source of consolation and strength for those who are in the midst of hardships and trials. "Let the just rejoice before God and be delighted with gladness" (Ps. 67. 4).

1. In order to practise walking in the presence of God we should, before all, avoid dissipation of mind, worldly visits, conversations, amusements, useless reading, superfluous cares, too many occupations, and especially avoid being too greatly absorbed in our employment, and idle curiosity.

2. We should often pray for the grace of walking constantly in the divine presence, saying: "Direct, O Lord, my way in Thy sight" (Ps. 5. 9).

3. We should strictly observe silence according to our Rule.

4. We should have order and system in the employment of our time.

5. We should seek God in all things and make a good intention at the beginning of every action.

6. We should frequently during the day make fervent ejaculatory prayers, and often raise our heart to God, just as large fish frequently rise to the surface of the water, in order to get air and

to keep up their life. God is our spiritual life; hence the necessity of often raising our heart to Him!

Now if we habitually walk in the presence of God, we shall acquire the habit of recollection and of constantly communing with God, and this is already mental prayer. And when we set about making meditation, we have only to continue and intensify our habit of recollection, and meditation, or mental prayer, will become, in some manner, easy and natural to us, as it was to the saints!

35. OUR FALLS AND THEIR CAUSES. (G)

Although the religious state is a great protection and preservative against sin, it does not, however, render us impeccable. The fall of some of the apostles should be a warning to us and should teach us that, so long as we are in this life, however great our progress in perfection may have been and however firm our resolutions may be, we can never enjoy perfect security, but must always mistrust ourselves and our weakness.

I. Let us first take the example of Judas. Judas was an apostle specially chosen by our divine Saviour and destined to attain great sanctity and to convert a great portion of the world. For three years he had faithfully followed Jesus Christ amid numerous hardships and persecutions, and had received from Him countless marks of affection; he had, moreover, been endowed with great powers, and even with the gift of miracles. Nevertheless, he fell deeply and lost his soul. How did this happen?

1. The beginning of his fall originated in his attachment to worldly goods, in his fondness for money. He did not seek to restrain and overcome this evil inclination, but repeatedly yielded to it until he became an habitual sinner, a thief!

2. Having fallen thus far, he soon lost all reverence for his divine Master, for when St. Mary Magdalen poured the precious ointment on our Saviour, Judas found fault with her and loudly murmured, and thus indirectly criticised Jesus Himself.

3. When Jesus reproved him for his want of charity, he would not submit, but full of resentment and eager for gain, he went out to propose a bargain with our Lord's enemies for His betrayal. And when at the Last Supper Jesus washed his feet, he was not touched by this token of His excessive humility, and had the impudence when Jesus declared that one of the apostles was about to betray Him, to ask whether he was the traitor! Judas, moreover, showed not the least gratitude for or appreciation of the infinite love of Jesus in giving Himself to him in holy Communion. Instead of thanking Him, he at once went out to consummate his treachery!

4. We know the result; how he, under the guise of friendship, accosted Jesus, kissed Him and betrayed Him into the power of His deadly enemies; and how, when he saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse, brought back the price of his treason, publicly acknowledged his guilt and, out of despair, hanged himself!

5. Religious may fall like Judas by fostering little attachments, especially those that are opposed to poverty. Deliberate faults soon become frequent and habitual and, therefore, very danger-

ous. "A soul," says St. Gregory, "that habitually commits small faults, unconsciously becomes addicted to greater ones. It is often less dangerous to commit greater offenses than those that are only venial, because we are more keenly sensitive to the enormity of a grievous sin and more zealous in correcting it."

6. By habitually breaking a rule, by habitual disobedience, we soon lose all regard for our rules, for the orders of our superiors, and begin to murmur and complain when things do not please us, to criticise our superiors and lose all respect for them.

7. We next take one step further in the road to ruin, by not humbly submitting to reproofs, by bearing ill-will to our superiors for correcting us, and by allowing our resentment to carry us so far on such occasions as to become discontented and full of temptations against our vocation! How many religious have thus lost their vocation to secure their independence or some temporal advantage, and have later on perished miserably! To secure ourselves against so terrible a misfortune, let us strive to be faithful in little things, and to be filled with the greatest reverence for our rules and superiors, and to esteem our vocation above everything in this life.

II. Let us next consider the fall of St. Thomas. He was also an apostle chosen by Jesus Christ Himself. He, nevertheless, fell into unbelief concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Why?

1. First, on account of his singularity, for he remained away from the other apostles and kept by himself. He, therefore, did not share in the joy and happiness of the other apostles when Jesus appeared to them on the evening of the day of His resurrection and wished them a twofold peace.

2. He was also self-willed and obstinate and would not give up his views to the testimony of the apostles.

3. He was proud and considered himself more intelligent than the other apostles, for he wished to see and judge for himself.

4. And perhaps he was also jealous of them.

5. Are we not, like St. Thomas, singular, and avoid, whenever we can, being with the community? Are we not also stubborn, self-willed, obstinate, unyielding in our views, ever ready to dispute, and even apt to resist our superiors? Are we not proud and conceited concerning our talents and our abilities? Are we not jealous of our companions, of their good qualities, of their office, of their deeds, of their popularity? Are not these the principal sources of our countless faults, of our distaste of the religious life or of certain of our companions?

III. Finally, let us consider the fall of St. Peter. St. Peter was not only an apostle, but had been chosen by Jesus Christ to be the foundation of His Church, to be His Vicar on earth. He was the most fervent and zealous of the apostles, and

bore our divine Saviour greater love than they. When Jesus spoke of His being forsaken by His apostles, St. Peter protested more loudly than the rest of his unswerving fidelity and readiness to die for Him; and when Jesus told him of his approaching denial, he would not believe it, and declared that he would remain steadfast, even if all the rest were to forsake Him. Such were his dispositions before the hour of trial, and he was really sincere; and when it did come, he, like the rest, forsook His divine Master. He soon, however, followed Him from afar and entered the court of Caiphas, whence among the servants and the curious, he assisted at the trial of Jesus. We know how at the question of a maidservant he denied our Lord, and afterwards confirmed his denial with an oath and the most frightful imprecations! How did he come to fall so deeply?

1. He fell because he was proud and presumptuous. After Peter had nobly confessed the divinity of Christ, our Saviour spoke of His approaching Passion; but Peter took Him aside, saying: "God forbid that this should happen to Thee." But Jesus said to him: "Get thee behind me, Satan," that is, "tempter." Peter was greatly averse to the least suffering and humiliation, and yearned after honors and dignities. Moreover, he considered himself stronger and more faithful than the other apostles; whilst admitting that *they* might forsake Jesus, he felt sure that such a disgrace could never befall *him!*

2. When, in the garden of olives, Jesus urged him to pray that he might keep out of temptation and sin, he failed to pray under the pretext that his mind was made up and could not be influenced or altered by any danger or adverse circumstance.

3. When the time of trial came, Peter showed his weakness by deserting his divine Master in a cowardly manner. Then seeing that he was not pursued, he mustered up a little courage and followed Jesus, but from afar, lest he might otherwise be arrested also. He, therefore, kept away from what he considered a danger for him, but fell into a still greater danger by going into bad company! Had he courageously followed Jesus Christ, trusting in the divine assistance, what a noble example he would have given us! But, alas, owing to his pride and presumption and his neglect of prayer, he fell ignominiously!

4. We also may fall like St. Peter, for, in the first place, are we not proud and conceited? Do we not hate and detest humiliations? Do we not despise others for committing certain faults and congratulate ourselves in being exempt from them? In the next place, are we not careless at prayer? Do we not pray as little and as seldom as we can? Do we omit the prayers prescribed and fail to pray in time of temptation? Do we not also, like St. Peter, shrink from closely following our divine Saviour, and follow Him only from afar, seeking our ease and comfort in His service, instead of courageously renouncing ourselves?

Do we not also often expose ourselves to danger through our curiosity? Finally, have we not also miserably fallen? Have we not thereby endangered our vocation, our salvation?

IV. Let us earnestly resolve to amend and to imitate St. Peter's conversion and penance.

1. In the first place, his conversion was prompt and complete. After his shameful fall, the fearful imprecations had scarcely fallen from his lips, when St. Peter heard the cock crow and beheld Jesus, just condemned to death, turning towards him and casting upon him a look of mercy and compassion. St. Peter was at once deeply moved and became conscious of his deep fall; he immediately left the bad company he was in, went out and wept most bitterly. Let us, like St. Peter, repent as soon as we discover our failings, quit the occasions of our faults and bewail them sincerely.

2. The penance of St. Peter was lasting, for he rose to fall no more. His fall made him humble and mistrustful of himself. He was no longer bold and presumptuous, as we can see from the humble manner in which he protested his love for Jesus, when Jesus entrusted His Church to his care and made him His Vicar on earth. Tradition tells us that St. Peter did penance for his fall during the remainder of his life, that he wept whenever he heard a cock crow, and that he wholly devoted himself to labor for the glory of God and the salvation of men. Let us imitate St. Peter in his penance,

and strive to persevere by daily performing works of penance, serving God with the utmost fervor and enduring every suffering and hardship for His sake.

3. What was the reward of St. Peter's penance? His sin was entirely forgiven, and Jesus never even alluded to it. After His resurrection Jesus appeared to St. Peter before appearing to the other apostles. He was not only not deposed from the apostolate, but was raised to the dignity for which he had been destined, that of Head of the Church of Jesus Christ.

If we imitate St. Peter's penance, we shall obtain not only the full forgiveness of our sins, but also a great increase in grace, and may become great saints and do great things for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

36. SCANDAL. (G)

“It must needs be,” says our divine Saviour, “that scandals come” (Mat. 18. 7). By scandal is meant a word or an act tending to lead the weak into sin. St. Peter calls it: “A stone of stumbling, a rock of scandal” (1 Pet. 2. 8).

1. Every bad example, and sometimes the omission of a good example also, is a scandal. Scandals abound in the world, and are to be found even in religious communities. This, however, does not mean that shocking scandals occur therein, for there are scandals which are not shocking, for they are not the outcome of crime or of grievous sin; and such scandals will form the subject of our present consideration.

The imperfect religious, the tepid religious, gives scandal whenever he gives a bad example, especially when it is habitual. Constant bad example in breaking silence, in murmuring and complaining against superiors and officials, in criticising them, in finding fault with their conduct, in neglecting the spiritual exercises, in violating charity, in the careless discharge of duty, in transgressing even the minutest rule, is dangerous and contagious, and apt, in the course of time, to lead the rest of the community into the same faults and to intro-

duce relaxation of the religious spirit. The tepid religious, therefore, tempts his companions constantly to tepidity and thus "executes," says St. Bernard, "the devil's designs." How often does it not happen that those who valiantly combat their passions and the devil's temptations, allow themselves to be led away by the bad example of a companion, against whom they are not on their guard! "The devil," says St. Leo, "makes use of men to accomplish what he is unable to do himself." The imperfect and tepid religious is the devil's agent, for

1. In the first place, he teaches sin or relaxation by his bad example. St. Cyprian says that the easiest way to learn how to commit sin is by seeing others committing it. How many religious never had any temptation against their superior, a companion, the food given to the community, certain houses of the Institute, or against their vocation, until some imperfect religious, by his insidious remarks or suggestions, filled them with such temptations, which have ever since rendered them discontented and miserable, and may, in the end, even prove fatal to them!

2. The tepid religious, by his bad example, authorizes the breaking of the Rule, especially if he is the superior, or an elder member of the community, or one who possesses influence by his talents and ability, for others, especially the juniors, will not scruple to follow his example.

3. He spreads tepidity and the spirit of relax-

ation. "Fervor," says Savonarola, "is not contagious," because it requires the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice to imitate it. But bad example or scandal is contagious, for it is like a leaven, an insidious cancer or leprosy, which secretly, but surely, spreads through the whole community, until it permeates every member in it. It is like a rotten apple which soon causes all the other apples in the barrel to rot also, and like a corrupt pupil who soon corrupts the whole school by his vices.

4. The tepid religious perpetuates relaxation and abuses. Some may try to resume a fervent life, but their efforts, counteracted by the evil example of others, will be futile, for they soon relapse and possess no power for good over their companions. Such is the history of the relaxation of certain religious orders in the past, which became a scandal in the Church and produced such men as Luther and consorts.

II. "It must needs be that scandals come," says our divine Saviour; "but woe to him through whom scandals come" (Mat. 18.7), for "it were better for such a one, that a millstone be hung about his neck, and that he be cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of these little ones" (Ibid. 6). Such a one shall be most severely punished not only for his personal sins, but also for the sins his bad example led others to commit. One of our principal duties as Christians and religious is to give good example to our

neighbor. "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 5.16). No man is dispensed from this obligation; and no one has greater obligations in this matter than religious, who are called to a higher perfection than seculars.

III. The tepid religious, or scandal-giver, overthrows the designs of God who has called all the members of his Institute to become saints and to labor for the salvation of souls. But by his constant and habitual bad example, he not only deprives the members of his community of the powerful help of mutual edification, of emulation in the practice of virtue, but also leads others into a life of tepidity, and, as far as lies in his power, introduces the spirit of relaxation and abuses that undermine the good spirit of the Institute and greatly impair, if they do not actually destroy, its usefulness. He is responsible not only for his personal sins, but also for the evil consequences of his bad example. What a dreadful responsibility!

We should seriously examine our conscience as to whether or no we have filled any of our companions with temptations against their vocation, their superiors or some of their companions; whether we have caused them to grow discontented, careless or lax in the service of God, in the observance of the rules. Let us be fully determined henceforth to give to all a good example in

the regular observance and to do all in our power to repair the injury we have done by our past misconduct.

IV. Taking scandal, or following bad example, is almost as bad as giving it. We should never allow ourselves to be led into committing faults, whether we are tempted by the devil, our own evil propensities or the bad example of our companions. The bad example of others is no excuse for our sins, for we have a free-will, which not even God can coerce, and we are well acquainted with all that duty requires of us. "Keep your rules strictly," says St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi; "if others fail to keep them, endeavor to supply their deficiency by greater regularity on your part."

Far from imitating the imperfect and the tepid, we should grieve over them, consider their example as dangerous to us, and avoid too great familiarity with them and their notions. Let us prudently, but firmly, oppose their false maxims and their lax conduct; but also let us, at the same time, refrain from judging and condemning them, for this belongs, not to us, but to God; and, moreover, let us humble ourselves before God, since without His special assistance, we would become worse than the most wicked of mankind!

37. MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS. (G)

I. Let us first consider the union established between Jesus and Mary by her divine Maternity.

1. As the Mother of the Son of God, Mary is united to Jesus first, in the eternal divine decrees and in the promises of the Saviour made in the beginning of the world. It was by her that the serpent's head was to be crushed (Gen. 3.15). She is the branch of Jesse that is to bear the blessed fruit (Is. 11.1). She is the virgin-mother and the Emmanuel, "God with us," is her Son (Is. 7.14). She is the Mother of the Perfect Man (Jer. 31.22). She is the Queen seated at the right of the King (Ps. 44.10). She is the wonderful temple, the dwelling of Wisdom (Wisd. 9.)

2. Secondly, in the figures of the Old Testament. Eve is, by opposition or contrast, a figure of Mary. Eve was drawn forth from Adam's side; Mary draws all her merits (spiritual life) from her divine Son. Eve, seduced by an angel of darkness, was the first cause of our ruin; Mary, hearkening to the words of the angel from heaven, began the work of our redemption in the Incarnation of the Son of God. Other figures of Mary: Esther obtaining the safety of her people; Judith victorious over Holofernes; the burning bush, a

figure of her Immaculate Conception and virginity; the fleece of Gideon is likewise a figure of the same.

3. Mary at the moment of the Incarnation is united to God in a special and most intimate manner: "He that made me, rested in my tabernacle" (Eccli. 24.12). Mary's blood was the matter from which was formed the body of Jesus; He was in her and entirely of her, living by her life! "The Lord is with thee;" "Behold the Mother of my Lord" (Luke 1.28,44). She is truly the Mother of God!

4. Mary's soul was united to Jesus in a special manner. St. Bernard says that she conceived Him in her heart before conceiving Him in her womb. She was united to Him by the most lively faith, the most ardent charity, by her consent which is thrice daily venerated in the Church in the *Angelus*. Mary was everywhere with Jesus: at Bethlehem, in Jerusalem, in Egypt, at Nazareth, and particularly on Calvary.

5. In heaven Mary is on His right hand, associated with His glory and His powerful action in the salvation of the world; she is united with God far more intimately than all the saints.

6. On earth she is united with Jesus in the praises of the Fathers, in the prayers of the liturgy, in the definitions of Councils, in the celebration of the mysteries and feasts of the Church and in the love, affection, confidence and invocation of the faithful. Jesus and Mary are inseparable.

II. No one resembles Jesus more than Mary. The law of nature ordains that the son should physically resemble his mother; the law of grace requires that the Mother of the Son of God should be in all things worthy of such a Son. This is apparent in her wonderful privileges: Her Immaculate Conception, a privilege shared by no other creature; her wonderful and unexampled virginity; her profound humility, unequaled by any other creature; her divine Maternity; her perfect charity, the nearest in perfection to that of the Redeemer. It made her prompt in visiting St. Elizabeth, faithful in preserving in her heart the words of eternal life, attentive to the wants of her neighbor at Cana, heroic, devoted and self-sacrificing during her divine Son's ministry and passion, so useful to the apostles and so dear to the infant Church.

III. How great an authority does not her divine Maternity impart to her! For thirty years the Son of God honored and obeyed her. Jesus, when dying on the cross, gave her to us as our Mother. Hence the Mother of God is our Mother also in all its meaning and extent. In heaven Jesus glorifies her by graciously granting all her requests, which are all-powerful with Him. She is the dispensatrix of divine grace, the help of Christians, the defense of the Church against heresy and unbelief. St. Bernard truly says: "We receive all from her who gave us Jesus." How fortunate, how secure are those she loves and protects!

IV. No one has greater reasons and obligations to honor, love and invoke Mary as the most tender of mothers, or has stronger claims to her protection than we religious. She is, in a special manner, *our* Mother. All the extraordinary graces we have received from her divine Son, such as our religious vocation and the countless graces since our entrance into the convent; she has preserved us from numberless dangers and falls. It is through her hands that we expect the graces we need to sanctify ourselves and that of final perseverance. She looks upon us with special love as consecrated and espoused to her divine Son. Let us, then, honor, serve and love her as the most loving of mothers; and let us do all we can to cause others to love, honor, serve and invoke her with confidence. Let us in all our temptations, crosses and trials invoke her help with child-like confidence, and she will be to us the Mother of Perpetual Help!

38. MARY, OUR MOTHER. (G)

I. Jesus Christ gave us Mary, His own Mother, as our Mother, saying: "Behold thy Mother." Let us consider all the circumstances of this gift.

1. She has been given to us as our Mother by Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the sovereign Lord of all creatures, from whom emanates all grace and power; by Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind who had already sacrificed the body and lavished the blood He had received from Mary. Having already given us Himself, and with Himself all things, He bestows His Mother on us as the complement of all His gifts.

2. Jesus gives her to us in the clearest, most precise and strongest terms, to enable us to realize their full meaning: "Behold thy Mother." When showing the bread at the Last Supper, Jesus said: "This is My body," and the bread thereby became His true body. Pointing to His Mother, He said: "Behold thy Mother," and Mary at once became our Mother.

3. Mary was given us as our Mother under the most solemn circumstances. Jesus, when dying, signified His last will. The beloved John was the only one of His disciples present to receive in the

name of all Christians the last gift their divine Master wished to bestow on them, His own Mother!

4. Jesus gave Mary to us as "our Mother." Man does not live by bread, or corporal food, alone; his soul has likewise a spiritual life to receive and support. Mary has been made our spiritual or supernatural Mother, that we may live through her by grace. The principle of the supernatural life is in Jesus; but in this spiritual or supernatural life Mary's is the bosom that bore us, the milk that nourished us, the maternal heart that always loves her children, even when they prove ungrateful.

5. Why did Jesus give us a Mother according to grace? And why was this Mother His own Mother? Jesus wished to become our Brother, that all should be in common between Him and us, that, if the infinite height of His divine nature terrified us, a creature, His own Mother, should become ours and serve as our advocate, our refuge, our Mediatrix with Him, and thereby encourage the most timid, open the hearts of the most oppressed by fear, and inspire all men with the sweetest motives of confidence, always well founded and never too great, for a mother always loves her child, and Jesus, the Son of Mary, will always love and honor His Mother.

II. Mary has always shown herself our Mother.

1. In the first place, she received us to her heart, when Jesus gave us to her as her children. Holy

Scripture calls Jesus her first-born; and we should, after Him, be born in her, by her.

2. Mary, as our Mother, has nourished us not only with the graces her prayers have obtained for us, but also with the body and blood of her divine Son which we receive in holy Communion.

3. Mary has forestalled us, cared for us, loaded us with favors. All the graces we have received from the Lord have been solicited and obtained for us by her, such as: our call to the true faith, the graces of a Christian education, our religious vocation, the numberless favors we have received since our entrance into religion and which we still receive daily notwithstanding our ingratitude and want of coöperation. All these great graces have come to us from Jesus through Mary.

4. Whenever necessary, Mary obtains for the defense and salvation of her children extraordinary graces and even astounding miracles. What prodigies have awakened, sustained and spread everywhere confidence in Mary! What striking proofs of her protection the Church recalls to her children by solemn feasts, pious practices and precious indulgences! What titles does she give Mary, in order to testify the gratitude of her children! Such as: Help of Christians, Health of the weak; Comfort of the afflicted, Refuge of sinners, Mother of mercy, Gate of heaven, our Life, our Sweetness and our Hope, Mother of Good Counsel, Mother of Perpetual Help. What great concourses of people flock every year, to the places

where she is most honored, where she obtains numerous favors for those who invoke her! What prayers and acts of thanksgiving for favors obtained are made at her altars and shrines!

5. Mary's protection preserves her children from dangers, secures to them victory over temptations, and is an assured pledge of predestination, for St. Alphonsus says, "A true servant of Mary cannot be lost!"

III. We owe to Mary, first, love, for she is the most perfect of creatures, the Beloved of God. Secondly, gratitude, for she has lavished benefits upon us; thirdly, filial affection, for she is our Mother; fourthly, confidence, for her power and her title of our Mother have been conferred on her, that we should always be certain that she is ever able and willing to help us; fifthly, imitation of her virtues, for she expects from our love that we shall endeavor to resemble her spiritually. We children of the purest of virgins should be pure! We children of the Mother of sorrows should be faithful to Jesus by bearing our cross and trials faithfully, as she did. Finally, we should zealously endeavor to spread love and devotion to her, and confidence in her intercession among all over whom we may possess any influence. Let us always prepare well for Mary's feasts and celebrate them to the best of our ability!

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